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the good Doctor Hunter S. Thompson -Mark Poutenis - The secret to his manly

EATURES

John Carpenter

We've watched "The Thing" forty times and we finally figured out who it was. Donald Pleasence on crack.

📭 KISS

Better living through spikes & spandex. Plus: Exclusive photos of Gene Simmons kicking the shit out of Marilyn Manson. We're serious.

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by John Rosenman

10 Cold Connection

by Dominick Cancilla

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On Manor's Mind

by Stately Wayne Manor

IN Confessions of an Adult Video Vixen by Ariel Hart

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for so little. And we wanna keep it that way.

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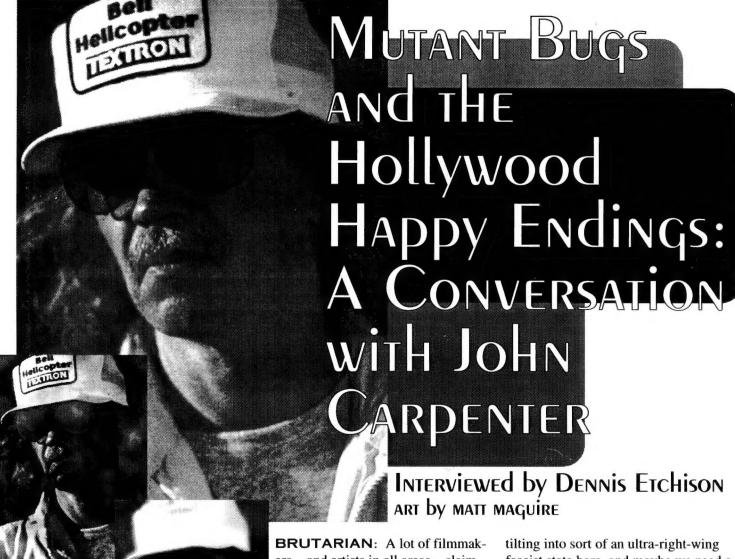
-Bridget Evans - Nice gal Just hide the key to the medicine cabinet.

-Bob Gorman - "Can I check your oil for you,

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BRUTARIAN:

How do you feel about films that have an overt political agenda? Not just Costa-Gavras and some Third World films, but Frank

Capra, for example? What's your reaction?

JOHN CARPENTER:

Mixed. Regardless of my hatred for some of the messages, they may be brilliantly made. Like *Triumph of the Will*. What it's espousing is this kind of Aryan white hero, from a low angle,

tracking through the crowds—but boy, is it gorgeous! So I'm attracted to them when they're well-made. And if it's a message I want to hear...

ers—and artists in all areas—claim they're primarily entertainers, without a political agenda. Do you think that's true? And where would you place yourself on that spectrum?

CARPENTER:
I don't believe it's
ever true that you
don't have a political agenda. But for
years I lied to
myself, and lied in
interviews, saying
that I'm not a political creature.
Because I think I
was afraid to come
out with an unpopular position. I

wanted to be liked, especially by the people in the business, get more jobs, not be ostracized. But if I said, "You know, guys, it seems that we're really tilting into sort of an ultra-right-wing fascist state here, and maybe we need a good old-fashioned dose of socialism to straighten this crap out..." I was afraid that wouldn't be acceptable.

BRUTARIAN: If you're looking for work, you don't want to be controversial

CARPENTER: I don't know what the cowardice was, really. But it was truly cowardice on my part. And I didn't become aware of certain things that I believed in until the middle of the eighties. I knew something was going in the United States then, but I was unclear as to what it was. I didn't read newspapers...

BRUTARIAN: You had strong political opinions, I'm sure.

CARPENTER: But unformed. Kind of floating out there. I had assumptions that I'd had since I was a kid. I was

shocked to learn how things have really changed in the country. Then I began to see people from my own generation denying what they were and rushing headlong into a sort of Eisenhower Republicanism. This kind of bizarre recreating of the Baby Boom of the fifties—that was such a shock. And the return of religion in politics. It's very, very strange. Maybe because of my ignorance when I was younger, and not keeping up with the news, I wasn't aware that religion was still very much in politics.

BRUTARIAN: I would think that if we have strong feeings about religion, or politics, or any abstract, it's going to come out in our work even if we're not aware of it. You don't think your early films were devoid of any political attitude, do you?

CARPENTER: No. They definitely had a political attitude. But I don't know that you'd discern it from *Assault on Precinct 13*. You might think, "Oh, this guy's rightwing."

BRUTARIAN: It was about law and order and protection against mob justice. Like Howard Hawks' *Rio Bravo*.

CARPENTER: Yes. Listen,
Hawks was a very conservative
filmmaker. He was certainly not
what you'd call a liberal. I was more
interested in the action and the
characters and the story, the fun
of cinema, as opposed to the
political implications. And I
think this was the first film where
I got called a racist in a review. I

BRUTARIAN: You had black

thought, What can they possibly

cops, didn't you?

be talking about?

CARPENTER: Yes. The

hero was black. There were black convicts and black cops.

BRUTARIAN: So you were being

accused of reverse racism?

CARPENTER: I have no idea. I

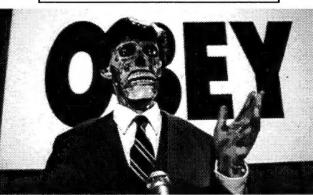
still, to this day, don't understand it.

BRUTARIAN: By the time you got to *They Live*, we began to see a more overt political attitude.

CARPENTER: I'd also grown up a great deal. I was a lot older. And I'd



1988's THEY LIVE



done different kinds of movies in my career by that point. *Starman* was a great deal different from *The Thing*. I got to do a romantic story. I got to do action. I got to do a Kung Fu movie, for God's sake. So at least I'd had one shot

at a lot of things, and I thought, I'm affected by what I'm seeing in the country, how it's changing. Why not go at it? *They Live* started off as a straight movie, just simply Ray Nelson's short story, kind of updated, brought into modern times—the Society's-Hypnotized-By-

Aliens story, which is okay. But it had a real neat kind of old-fashioned, forties paranoia. A man is suddenly aware of the creatures in his midst, and he's running through these dark streets...

BRUTARIAN: And he ends up giving the finger in a final gesture of defiance.

CARPENTER: Well, it changed a lot from where it started. Every time you make a scary movie you think of what could be the villain. What's the creature? What's the monster? Now back in the fifties, in science fiction, the monster stood for the atomic bomb, for the end of mankind. They were doing tests and they discovered that some animals mutate when exposed to radiation. One animal actually grew another part of a head or arm. It was very terrifying. And so Hollywood grabbed onto that, saying, "Look what we have done!"

BRUTARIAN: Mutant bug movies.

CARPENTER: Giant, radiated monsters. Even Roger Corman made one about the end of the world, where

there was a creature out there that used to be human, creeping around in the trees—

BRUTARIAN: The Day the World Ended.

CARPENTER: Unlike a kind of pansy movie like *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, where he comes down and says, "Now you behave,

you guys."

BRUTARIAN: Authoritarian, isn't it?

CARPENTER: Gort is a stand-in for the bomb—the robot that can destroy the world. And Michael Rennie's our conscience, telling us to get along.

BRUTARIAN: He's kind of the President of the Intergalactic U.N.



CARPENTER:
Of course he is.
There's nothing
wrong with that. I
love the message.
Who wouldn't?
But the more fun
films were always
dealing with monsters that represented something.

They were either radioactive, or they came from up there, and they were about the fear of Sputnik and the Russians. Anyway, it seemed to me it would be interesting to make the aliens just these unrestrained capitalists who are exploiting our earth.

BRUTARIAN: Science fiction has always been a metaphor for what was going on in society. In the fifties, Ray Bradbury wrote *Fahrenheit 451* as a direct comment on McCarthyism and book burning. Theodore Sturgeon wrote "Affair With a Green Monkey". But they weren't perceived as such, because they were presented as science fiction. People assumed it was just fantasy, and it was safe.

CARPENTER: H.G. Wells's War of the Worlds was about World War I. He was warning us of the industrial revolution arriving in warfare. He cloaked it as a view of that day. They Live was a view of the eighties. Especially of the left versus the right—rich people. Now I'm a rich person, so I'm probably one of those aliens. But in my work and my heart, I'm a blue collar guy. I'm one of the guys in the trenches.

BRUTARIAN: But if there's a revolution you might be perceived as part of the problem and lined up against the

CARPENTER: That's absolutely right, and that's one of the reasons it's dangerous to generalize about anybody. *They Live* generalized about the rich and the poor. But it was done for a purpose...

BRUTARIAN: It's almost a Marxist view of the exploitation of the workers.

CARPENTER: Sure. But you know, there are no voices now that are speaking out strongly anymore. None. The left has moved to the center. And the center has moved to the right. It's a gigantic shift.

BRUTARIAN: I write mostly in the horror field, as you know. And generally, I think that people who don't read horror think of it as completely apolitical, just for the purpose of providing scares and a certain senationalistic thrill. My view of horror is that when it's good it's a vehicle for political attitudes, just like anything else. Let me throw out an idea and see how you react. Some people have suggested that when horror identifies the enemy as something outside, the creature from the darkness, it's in some fundamental way conservative or reactionary-xenophobic. Because it's the alien, the Other, who is going to come and give you trouble. On the other hand, horror that postulates that

the enemy may be within you, that we may all have the tendency to become killers, is somehow a more progressive or liberal view. I don't want to be absurd in applying that, but I think any horror story, if it's a serious piece of writing, is going to reflect the attitudes you have about the world and about yourself. Do you think of your own horror films now as having been completely apolitical? They express an attitude, don't they?

CARPENTER: They probably do, unconsciously.

BRUTARIAN: That's usually the

best kind, when you're not aware of it. Now we could sit down and write an essay about our political ideas and publish it as an article. That would be an argument, and it would receive argument back. But it always seemed to me that the more effective way to do it is through a work of art, where you can appeal to the emotions without the audience realizing that they've been persuaded.

carpenter: Yes. That's the definition of propaganda. It's been done as long as man has been walking the earth. Sometimes in a very terrifying way, like *Triumph of the Will*. You can make a beautiful case—*The Turner Diaries* is certainly an example. That's a novel of the race war, about the ultra-right wing, the posse comitatus and all those guys, which describes an attack by the survivalist right on the United States government, including blowing up a federal building. It's like a blueprint. An extremely inflammatory book.



BRUTARIAN: It sounds like the point where the right and the left meet in their distrust of government. CARPENTER:

Interesting, isn't it? Because of the crazed racist beliefs of these folks, I can't understand them. It's like the belief in magical fairies. It's beyond me.

BRUTARIAN: You come from the South. And you grew up in an environment where you saw a lot of racist attitudes...

CARPENTER: And I can't understand it. It's even stronger now than it was. I have never seen anything change so fast. There was a lot of idealism in the sixties, about—

BRUTARIAN: Integration. Getting along.

CARPENTER: And we thought a certain period of our history was over. Sure, we had to fight for equality, but that time was gone. In fact it's gotten more polarized and more racist.

BRUTARIAN: Like the Confederate flag being flown again on state capitals? CARPENTER: It's terrible now. Churches burning. And the attitudes are so much worse.

BRUTARIAN: There used to be the tradition of the progressive Southern Democrat who was for human rights. *To Kill A Mockingbird*...

CARPENTER: Dennis, you've got to understand that what people now do not want to do is pay. They don't care—they just don't want to pay their taxes any more. They've had it. They don't want to spend any of their money.

BRUTARIAN: So the target becomes welfare recipients, special programs...

CARPENTER: Who goes first? It's all about money. If you ask somebody, "Do you want to exclude this group?"



1986's BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA

"Oh no, of course not, I'm not a racist—but I'm not going to pay them one dime. Why don't they get a job?" That's what you'll hear.

BRUTARIAN: Because it's not their group.

CARPENTER: Exactly. You hear the Right use these words, and they're code words. Every black person knows what they're talking about. Even I know what they're talking about. They'll deny it. See, one of the things that happened in the Right is that racism went underground. They said, "Well, we can't just stand out there on the steps like those idiot governors did in the fifties..."

BRUTARIAN: And say "nigger". CARPENTER: We'll say something else in the place of it.

BRUTARIAN: Like crime in the poor neighborhoods. Like letting the wrong element into our schools.

CARPENTER: And welfare reform. What it means is, "I don't want to pay

you any more money."
It doesn't matter
whether I owe it to you.
It doesn't matter
whether I should. I'm
not going to.

BRUTARIAN: So

these attitudes are more

overt now than they were a few years ago. The gloves are off. CARPENTER: Of course. But it's not just that. Our means of conversing, the level of discourse in this country has dropped to the level of insult. It's like watching tabloid television. There's celebrity worship, but we always want to know who the celebrity's fucking. And tear them down.

Completely rip them to shreds. We want to build thenmup, and we want to kill them.

BRUTARIAN: The sitcoms on the networks now are full of insult humor, rather than jokes or wit.

CARPENTER: And now there's insult viewing of movies. "Oh yeah, kick his ass!"

BRUTARIAN: We used to hear this in horror movies.

CARPENTER: I used to hear screaming.

BRUTARIAN: "Don't go down that hall. Don't open that door."

CARPENTER: They're making fun of movies now. They're laughing at it, and the movie's laughing and winking at the audience.

BRUTARIAN: Like Wes Craven's picture *Scream*?

CARPENTER: I have mixed feelings about it. But it sure worked for the audience. I mean, everybody went to see those old horror movies when they were young. Then they got more and more gross, but they were funny. And

eventually, in those teen movies, they started dropoping any character delineation between the kids so that the audience could look down on them for being so stupid. It was a planned tactic. So it made the movies really dumb. "Oh, that stupid girl, why did she do that?" It acknowledged that and then let the audience congratulate

ments from now on? What would you be like after 20 ye. **CARPENTER:** You've got to remember that in terms of my own toowork, I come from THE SPACED-OUT SPACESHIP the Howard Hawks school. "Look, I'm here to deliver to the company the best The one O'Bannon always leaves off his resume-1974's DARK STAR themselves on seeing the formula. At

the same time it provided a few scares, as if to say it's really okay to like this stuff again. Just because people tell you that bloody movies are bad for you, I'm going to give you a little guilty pleasure. And Wes did a really, really smart move on his part. I don't have to invest my belief particularly. I can have a good time. Plus, a lot of cute babes in the film, too!

BRUTARIAN: You and he are probably perceived as apolitical filmmakers, as entertainers. And yet I'm sure he has political ideas.

CARPENTER: Oh, huge.

BRUTARIAN: And I suppose they come out in some way.

CARPENTER: Don't you think that every horror director-Wes Craven or George Romero or David Cronenbergdon't you think they have some point of view? Look at David's last movie, Crash. Whether you like it or not-

BRUTARIAN: He's making a commentary.

CARPENTER: He sure is. George especially did that.

BRUTARIAN: Are you inclined to be more direct in your political statemovie I can and make the most money that we can get out of it." That's my job.

BRUTARIAN: If you were asked to shoot a script that took a reactionary position-

CARPENTER: I wouldn't touch it. I couldn't. There was an interesting one that Paramount offered me, White Dog. A strong story.

BRUTARIAN: Sam Fuller finally did it. A good film.

CARPENTER: It was. It made a real comment about racism. But I was unable to embrace that kind of darkness.

BRUTARIAN: Because it's too close to the knuckle?

CARPENTER: Way too close. It turns off so many people. See, all these horror stories, they've got to be dressed up in atomic hats for a mass audience. Or a haunted house. Or fangs. Then it's okay. That's the other side.

BRUTARIAN: But if it's cops killing blacks on the streets it's a little

CARPENTER: It bothers me, but I've seen a lot of that. It goes on and on and on. So you're talking about an ambivalence from my career point of view. People, when they seek out a

> movie, don't want to go see anything that's too grim.

BRUTARIAN:

That might be why an excellent movie like Cronenberg's Dead Ringers didn't do big business. It was a fine movie, but it was very disturbing.

CARPENTER:

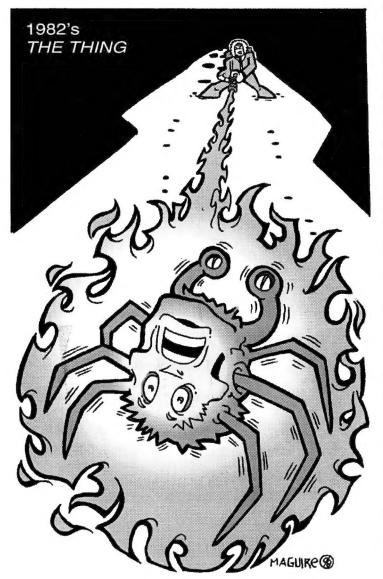
Extremely disturbing. We're really not in the cultural climate to embrace those kinds of films. The climate we're

in now is just soaking up this programmed entertainment, and it's like a drug. Everybody wants to believe that the world is just great. Nobody can smoke anymore. And it's really getting strange, but in a very rigid, right-wing way.

BRUTARIAN: There are all sorts of laws now to make things safer and safer for us. The people who are passing these laws say they're doing it for our protection. I can't argue with them about smoking, but I dislike being told that I can't.

CARPENTER: Oh, you're a kneejerk rebel, that's what you are! There's a part of me...My dad told me to question authority. Which is a very bad thing to do if you're on the Right. Especially for the religious folks—they don't believe you should ever question authority. Because it's too dangerous. You might find out something. You might go have fun. I mean, we're talking about things that have bothered the right wing since the Enlightenment. Questioning authority. Free love. And man was never supposed to create—that was only for God. Men could be artisans. They made little pots. I can build you an aqueduct. I can make a weapon of war. But I am not creating anything. That's God's domain, according to deeply religious people...

give up our prejudice, whether it's against homosexuals, or socialism—the idea of freeloaders. You and I, though, are the same. We're all humans on the planet. If you stop thinking about reward and punishment for a minute, you can equalize everyone. Then the problem, of course, is how do you structure a society that's fair?



BRUTARIAN:

A lot of the things that were supposed to be settled back in the sixties have reared their heads with even greater strength. The freedom to ingest whatever chemicals you like, the freedom for a woman to do with her body what she wants, the idea that what you do is okay as long as it doesn't hurt anybody else...It seemed those issues were won thirty years ago, but apparently they're not.

CARPENTER:

They're never won. You have to fight for them all the time.

BRUTARIAN:

So there's an endless series of revolutions, of resistances. Our gener-

ation has been complacent, and while we were looking the other way, the right wing gathered its forces. Do you feel any hope about the new generation?

CARPENTER: Oh, I think so.

Because people of my generation are idiots. We're all fools.

BRUTARIAN: And they're going to react against the Reagan Republicanism that they grew up in.

CARPENTER: Absolutely. I can't wait. If you don't think your children will rebel, you don't understand your children. It's their job to rebel.

BRUTARIAN: And the more offensive to you their culture is—their music, their dress style—the better.

CARPENTER: This is what rock and roll is built on.

BRUTARIAN: To piss off the older generation.



CARPENTER:

It's a total celebration if you can piss off your parents. That's our struggle. To get through it, so that you realize, "You know what? Just because I'm reacting doesn't mean

that I'm cool. Just because I am against what my parents believe doesn't mean I'm right. It means that I am now an individual."

BRUTARIAN: Have you ever been told to tone something down politically? CARPENTER: I had a little bit of that on *They Live*. I had final creative control over everything. So I felt, not that I should compromise, but what they had to say was probably valid to take into consideration. In other words, don't preach at people. Which I thought was a really good comment.

BRUTARIAN: *They Live* is a strong statement about individualism.

CARPENTER: Only because of the climate it came out in. If you saw that movie in a different time, you'd say, Oh yeah, sure.

BRUTARIAN: In the late sixties it might seem conservative.

CARPENTER: No big deal. But because of the time it came out, it has a bizarre kind of truth to it. About signals through the television that are making you buy things.

BRUTARIAN: Advertising.

BRUTARIAN: Individualism became the enemy of the church.

CARPENTER: The first time you think about "I..."

BRUTARIAN: You've lost humility. CARPENTER: All you really need as a human being is an ultimate concern for mankind. If you care about others at all, you'll know that you can't kill somebody. But some of us are not willing to

CARPENTER: And it is a truth of life. I'm not trying to make you believe. It's not about subliminal images. And people who misunderstand the movie think that's what it's about.

BRUTARIAN: But you use the metaphor to make the point-

CARPENTER: It's hypnotic images. Images that hypnotize you, and certainly commercials do that. I can remember jingles from the old days. I bet you can, too.

BRUTARIAN: Sure.

CARPENTER: I bet you could sing a cigarette commercial, or a car commercial.

BRUTARIAN: They're engraved on my hard disk.

CARPENTER: The terrifying thing is, the last sigh you have as a human being, one of those will run through your head. That is pure horror.

BRUTARIAN: My final words will be, "Winston tastes good, like a cigarette should." **CARPENTER**: That's exactly what's going to happen. We remember episodes of I Love Lucy. That's stunning.

BRUTARIAN: And you know every shot. Better than you recall an Orson Welles film, D.W. Griffith...You remember the angles and the lighting. the exact inflection...

CARPENTER: Incredible, isn't it? All these robotic folks. I did this experiment with my kids. If we were watching network television, like the NBA playoffs, I would hit the mute button on every commercial. It doesn't matter. You might as well turn the sound off. The images are so seductive. It's pornography to my wallet, is what it is!

BRUTARIAN: Do you see any hopeful signs in the media at the moment? Or is it becoming more cynical and alienating?



CARPENTER: There are a lot of good movies being made, a lot of new

young talent. When you go to film schools and talk to the students, the idealism is incredible. Just like ours was.

They're great. So you have a sense that things are going to be all right.

BRUTARIAN: Aren't they going to run up against the same studio system? **CARPENTER**: But everybody runs up against life just the same way. Very few of us have unique lives. Look, I was not born to a prince or a king. I didn't live in a palace with servants. I

wasn't one of the tiny percentage of people on earth who have a life like the last emperor of China. So like everyone else I have had to confront certain truths about life and about myself. And in probably much the same banal way that everybody does. We all basically have the same fears and the same problems. We all are afraid of the same things. My God, that's what horror trafficks in.

BRUTARIAN: Maybe the answer in horror is to get closer to telling the truth and being honest, rather than propagan-

CARPENTER: Do you want to be successful? Look at Michael Crichton. He's a good writer, but when you think about it later, it's more like cotton candy. But there's a place for that. It's fine to do popcorn, and do it well. Lovecraft had one formula, and he wrote it over

> and over again, and it's fun to read. Do I want to eat and read it all the time? No, but it's okay. It's good stuff.

BRUTARIAN: Where do you see yourself going in the next few years with film?

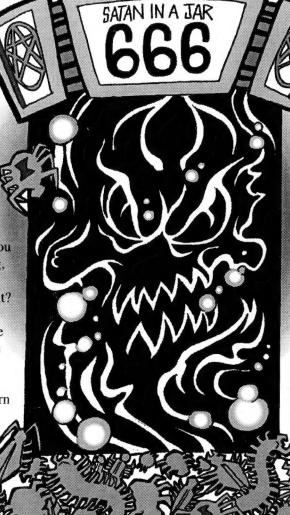
CARPENTER: My career? Wrapping it up. It's a stressful lifestyle.

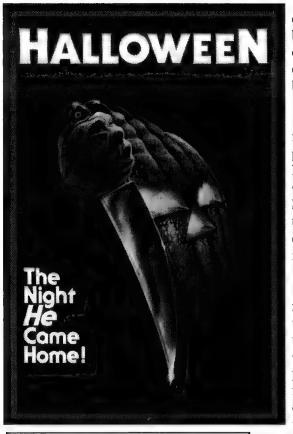
BRUTARIAN: Are there any personal projects that you'd like to do? CARPENTER: I would like to do some smaller, independent movies that don't have to make a big profit. As long as the people who invest their money get paid back. No one loses if you've got nothing to lose.

BRUTARIAN: To make a film in Hollywood requires a subsidy of a lot of money. So it seems reasonable that the person who's loaning you this monery should have some say about what you do with it. This is the conflict between art and commerce, isn't it? It was for

> the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, or anything else. There was a patron who was providing the

CARPENTER: That's correct. But there's also my favorite artist, Bach, who wrote





"It's not my fault!!!"
The one that started them all1978's *HALLOWEEN*

simply to test the organs in cathedrals. They were exercises. They utilized the high notes and the low notes. He wrote them as a mechanic fixes your car, He didn't even think about it. He just wrote them down, went in and played the organ to see how it would sound. He was a total journeyman. So there's nothing wrong with that. A lot of times out of that comes an incredible brilliance. That's why I love Howard Hawks so much.

BRUTARIAN: And that transcends any political differences you might have?

CARPENTER: Absolutely. He is a man who's talking to me, and he's using a form that's extremely conservative, but I have no problem with it. I understand what he's saying. John Ford occasionally did that. Most of the time it was Irish vaudeville, which I

Hey, check it out! A sober Harry Dean Stanton! And don't forget— Borgnine has an Oscar! 1981's ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK can't stand. Hitchcock was fun, but his thematic technique is worn on his sleeve like a beautiful jacket. I appreciate it. I'm not moved by it.

BRUTARIAN: In some of his films he moved into matters of personal obsession, like *Vertigo*. Psychosexual matters.

CARPENTER: Which to me is his best film, because it's his most twisted. Not necessarily the most entertaining. A lot doesn't happen in that movie.

BRUTARIAN: It seems the richest, though, doesn't it? You want to see it again and again and think about it. It's disturbing.

CARPENTER: Yeah. So there you go. Hitchcock himself ran from movies like *Vertigo* and couched his obsessions in other forms. He put his ice-blondes in

plots that were more accessible and understandable to us.

BRUTARIAN: North by Northwest is a much more open, outgoing film.

CARPENTER: He immediately made that change. Here's a man who's taking the winds into consideration—what the public wants to see. Which is what we're all doing. That's why, when I say I'll walk away from movies, it doesn't necessarily mean from creativity. I don't know that movies are the

purest form of expression. I think music is. It doesn't involve bullshit.

BRUTARIAN: It's not as abstract. It's more visceral.

CARPENTER: It's—(snapping his fingers). It doesn't need to be discussed.

BRUTARIAN: When you think about your own films, can you see any themes that come through?

CARPENTER: Some are more obvious than others. Some I can't. And some of the ones I'm not proud of are just kind of walk-throughs. Like Mitchum said, "Paint eyeballs on my eyelids and I'll sleep through it!"

BRUTARIAN: The message of *They Live* seems to be to open your eyes. **CARPENTER:** Yeah. Sleepers awake. Don't believe the propaganda. Question authority.

BRUTARIAN: Do you suppose that a work of art, a good movie, can contribute by waking us up?

CARPENTER: I have a feeling it can't. After a certain age I don't think that people fundamentally change. They're formed for life. You can only awaken an individual if you're their parent, instilling it when they're very, very young.

BRUTARIAN: What values are kids taught now, other than getting more money and more things?



CARPENTER: Beyond God and country?

BRUTARIAN: There was a sense, a few years ago, that we were striving for certain ideals. It seemed to begin with personal liberation, which if it occurred to enough people would remake society. Because we would be freed from within. CARPENTER: All I know is, there didn't seem to be anything wrong with the kind of music that we loved then, and it seemed natural to me when I was a teenager to want to bed down a woman. Makes total sense to me. Of course it wasn't quite as dangerous—we didn't have AIDS. But there were other things. We could go to Viet Nam and die. And I remember the Democratic convention, where they were in the streets beating us up. And May Day in 1970 when they shot us. Do we have any idealism now? Well, what we don't have is a war. We haven't had a serious depression. Most of the middle class, for some reason, doesn't seem to be reacting. America's going to have to deal with the issues of immigration and

race. What we're not doing is talking about them at this particular time. It's all about money now. In California it started in 1978, with Proposition 13.

BRUTARIAN: Property taxes.

CARPENTER: You cannot just raise them. I'm not going to pay any more.

BRUTARIAN: So that kids can go to school.

CARPENTER: Not only that, but I don't want to pay for those firemen or those cops in the street. It's your problem. Don't you tell me, with your big government, what I have to do. I'm going to keep my money. There's this incredible greed...

BRUTARIAN: I wonder if there's going to be a galvanizing issue, the equivalent of the Viet Nam War, that's going to come along and—

CARPENTER: Abortion is the only one I see.

BRUTARIAN: A big issue right

now. And here again, I thought it was settled back in the seventies.

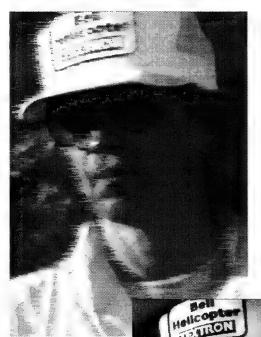
CARPENTER: Me too. It's not. The religious right took hold of that and ran with it. Because they think it's homicide. But you've got to take them seriously. We can't call them monsters. We've got to listen to them, and take them into consideration. Somebody's not an idiot because he disagrees with me. The Right has demonized the Left. All the people they're against—women, homosexuals, blacks, socialists...It's an ancient battle.

BRUTARIAN: It's presumed that leftists ideals died when the Soviet Union collapsed. As if it was a vindication.

CARPENTER: "Look, capitalism must work—we won!" Now the idea is enlightened self-interest. I'm going to fuck you over, but it's nothing personal. Don't worry about it.

BRUTARIAN: Like the Mafia. CARPENTER: It's just business, man! That, to me, is horrifying. If you





make a commitment to somebody, even if you're wrong, it doesn't matter. You can't just say, Fuck you. You've got to live up to what you said. That's responsibility. Now how come you preach responsibility to kids about drugs, about sex, about all this

bullshit, but you won't take responsibility in business? Where did this double standard come in?

BRUTARIAN: The Hawks westerns seemed to transcend Right and Left, because they're about honor, honesty, sticking by a man when you've given your word.

CARPENTER: Doing your job.

BRUTARIAN: Trying to do the right thing.

CARPENTER: Always.

BRUTARIAN: It doesn't matter if your friend is on the Right or the Left. If you promise you're going to be there for him, then you're supposed to be there. It's a matter of individual, personal morality.

CARPENTER: It is. And what's happening now goes back to the origins of the extreme Right in history, to these arguments over religion. You can make a case for religion being this perpetual evil. It's a belief in the supernatural—and if somebody believes something is supernatural, there is no evidence that you can throw in their face. There is no thought that will change their mind. Nothing. "This book is the truth, and it says what you should do." To me that is such a dangerous idea.

BRUTARIAN: Maybe the answer is to be more honest, to tell the truth, rather than propagandizing.

CARPENTER: I would not give you false hope.

BRUTARIAN: At least something more than Sisyphus pushing that rock up the hill again and again, forever.
Because the only alternative is suicide. There has to be some glimmer of existential hope at the end of the tunnel. Not false optimism, but something positive, some sense that there's a point to all this.

CARPENTER: A sad and mournful day.

BRUTARIAN: Is there anything beyond our own pleasure? There must be. We're part of a collective here, a society. And what we do that causes people to wake up, rather than go to sleep, would be positive for the race, for the species, wouldn't it? I'm sure you're not trying to lie to people when you write a script or make a film.

CARPENTER: Dennis, I think the Hollywood happy ending you're looking for are built into the way life's going to go. And I really wouldn't worry about it. It will definitely change. It's a matter of time. I think there are enough young people out there who are bombarded by the way the culture is that they're going to come and kick our asses. I saw it happen in my own lifetime, with the cultural change in the sixties. The groundwork started back in the fifties, with pulp novels like William Burroughs' *Junkie*, and in poetry, in music...

BRUTARIAN: The role of the arts. CARPENTER: And in movies like Blackboard Jungle—the first movie I ever saw with rock and roll, loud, over the opening. What was stunning was the fact that it was acknowledged. And there'll be a reaction again, don't worry. People heal themselves.

BRUTARIAN: Do we have the resiliency?

CARPENTER: It's going to take our kids to do it. Can we effect change? No, but we can survive.

BRUTARIAN: It would be better to go down in history as part of the solution, rather than part of the problem.

CARPENTER: Well, the solution is...

BRUTARIAN: Yes?
CARPENTER: Tastes change, but
you know what? It's unbelievable...the
Beach Boys are still playing! So, really—how bad can things be?



BRUTARIAN talks with Simmons & Stanley, the Gilbert & Sullivan of Kabuki-Monster Metal, whatever that means.

interview by HANK BORDOWITZ • art by KING GEO



If KISS published a magazine (like the Hendix estate currently does), people trying to reach pubescent boys (or post-pubescent boys who have yet to stop smelling like teen spirit) would need to advertise in it. Consider the golden age of magazines like Creem, Hit Parader and Circus. KISS on the cover sold magazines. As the former editor of Rock Scene, I can verify this. And that was well past that golden age.

Few fans are as rabid and supportive as KISS lans.

Probably because few bands were as accessible and open as KISS. They related to their fans, talked to their fans, and they still do.

they still do.

People who couldn't get past the image — the grease paint, outrageous costumes, fire breathing stage show — never got to the music. When the make-up came off in the early 80s, the fans stayed hooked. The influence the band had on the music that followed can be heard on the tribute album KISS My Ass. Artists and performers ranging from Anthrax to Garth Brooks pay homage to the band.

Not a band to miss a commercial opportunity, copies of the \$150 KISStory volume get the back page of the foldout insert. KISS founders Paul Stanley and Gene Simmons deal with all

this and lots more:

BRUTARIAN: Gene seems to do a lot with his down time from KISS. Films, producing other artists. He doesn't let moss grow under his feet.

STANLEY: I'd say that's a pretty accurate assessment. **BRUTARIAN:** What do you do with your off time? **STANLEY:** I let moss grow under my feet. We're real different when it comes to free time. Gene very much enjoys filling it, almost with anything. I think he'd be the first to admit that he enjoys the feeling of movement. We're different people. He gets involved with things that I would not necessarily get involved with. That's what makes for an interesting relationship and chemistry. We have different priorities, and different things that we like to do with our time.

BRUTARIAN: One of the things you did with your down time was put together a book.

SIMMONS: KISStory is this book that we've publishing. It's 9 lbs. a copy. 440 pages, 1 foot 1/4 by 1 ft. wide. It's a monster. Each one is numbered and signed by the band and each one comes in it's own hard shell case, embossed. You know, glossy cover, the best paper, the best printing money can buy. Done overseas. We printed it in Japan. Yeah, it's really high quality stuff and it's our history. Additionally, there's a 30 page comic book inside which chronicles some tour events and so on and talks about everything, our comics, our history.

BRUTARIAN: I understand that you've been a massive comic book collector for longer than you probably care to admit. **SIMMONS:** Oh, before rock n' roll. Actually, I was probably collecting before most of your readers were born. My first book was a *Detective Comic*. The year would have been 1958-59 maybe the latest. I don't remember much about it, except that it was in the Bat Cave and it was the first time I saw the extra large

Lincoln head penny and you know, the sort of bizarre Bob Kane

world of Batman's own fortress of solitude. But obviously it's not

fortunes of solitude. Just his Bat Cave.

BRUTARIAN: Was this when you were living in Israel? **SIMMONS:** No, we'd come to Brooklyn, New York by then. I mean at that point I was in religious theology school. I was a Hasidic Jew with the yarmulke and payos [the long strands of hair that very religious Jews never cut] and the whole thing. Comics were forbidden. You know, it was evil, it was about fighting. Later on, actually within two years or so, I started reading Atlas and all the old books, all the old Kirby monster books, which to this day I think is the best work he's done.

I have all this memorabilia. I have the postcard Stan Lee sent me saying: 'You sound like a creative young man. You are destined for great things.' You know, something like that. It was very, very sweet. One of the big buttons was pushed when I was a kid because of that postcard. Since then, you know whenever I get a letter like that, I try to remember that thing Stan did to me and to be nice to people. Just try to push their button so they do good stuff. I used to actually publish my own fanzine - comic books, science fiction and fantasy fanzine for the kids. In fact, Marv Wolfman and I were doing one together. Way back when most KISS fans were still pissing in their diapers.

BRUTARIAN: Were you back in Brooklyn? **SIMMONS:** No, this was in Queens, New York.

BRUTARIAN: Have you ever met Stan?

SIMMONS: Stan flew up with us on the plane we rented when we went up to do the KISS Comic books. He flew up



with us because we were drawing our blood to put into the kids comic books, so we flew up to Buffalo to the printing plant. They have footage of us actually dumping our blood into the red ink that was gonna be used to print the comic book.

BRUTARIAN: How much blood did you give for that thing, about a pint each? **SIMMONS:** Yeah, a pint. Most of the

books probably didn't wind up having it, but certainly there was some books that actually had our DNA right on the pages.

BRUTARIAN:

They're gonna clone you know from the book there.

SIMMONS:

Stranger things have happened.

BRUTARIAN: Do

you feel that there was a backlash because of the fact that there were KISS comics and KISS lunch-boxes and KISS pencil cases?

STANLEY: I think at one point we took a certain aspect of what we were doing as far as

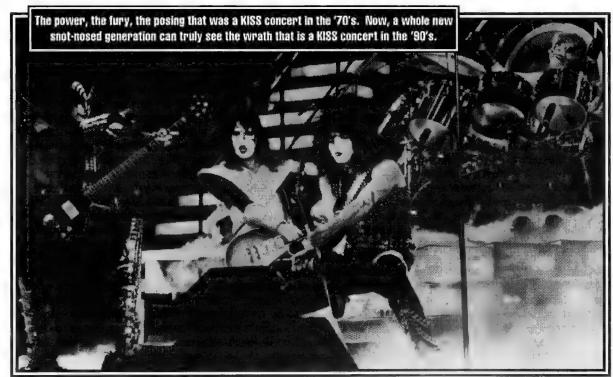
it would go. Not based on us cramming stuff down people's throats, but based on the fact that people wanted stuff. And we gave it to them. Then it was on to something else. There was more KISS merchandise than the Beatles, or anyone else, ever. Common sense tells you that you don't put out a KISS veg-e-matic if nobody's going to buy it. But I think things go in cycles, too. If someone stays

around for a long time, it's unrealistic to think that it's always going to be at the same level.

BRUTARIAN: Was there ever any one moment when you realized you and the band were not going to be laughed at anymore?

STANLEY: Thursday. Thursday morning. Who cares about who laughs at you? I'm more concerned with the people who think we're great. Life's too short to worry about the people who don't like you. Life is not about making converts. Life is about being with the people who respect you and like you. I'm not here to turn your opinion around. Whatever you think is fine. It'd be a waste of my time. So, that all of a sudden somebody wasn't going to laugh, well, it's your problem if you were laughing. It's not my problem to make you stop. I'm telling you, it never mattered, because whether or not somebody likes what I do is irrelevant. The reason for changing something is not for the people who don't like you. Anything you do is only based on positive stuff. It should never be, "How are we going to make somebody who doesn't respect us respect us?" Chances are, somebody who doesn't respect me doesn't have a clue to what I'm doing, anyway. So there's their problem right there. But I don't have time to change that.

BRUTARIAN: So it didn't matter when you realized that the band was respected by a group of people who weren't necessarily aware of you before.



STANLEY: There's a difference between people being aware of you and people not respecting you. That's a whole different issue, isn't it?

BRUTARIAN: I guess I'm talking about recognition. **STANLEY:** Forty million records is a hell of a lot of recognition. I'm not sure if taking of the makeup made certain people respect us, well, that's okay, but that's not what it was all about. That's fine with me, but that isn't what it was all about. **BRUTARIAN:** What was that about?

STANLEY: It was about time. It was about time to do it. When you create something out of freedom, and the fact that you can basically let your mind wander and come up with something, you can't become a prisoner to that. You create something, out of being adventurous. It can't become your ball and chain. After we had done it for a certain amount of time, it was

time to move on. It didn't feel right anymore. It felt like something that we should put to rest, and keep going forward.

It's like somebody saying that because you had a hairstyle ten year ago, you should have the same hairstyle today. Life isn't stagnant and a band isn't stagnant. Everything that you do is the foundation of what comes after it, but hell, we're still building.

hell, we're still building. **BRUTARIAN:** I used to work with one of your early producer's, Kenny Kerner.

He used to tell me tales. One thing he would say was "At best they were only mediocre musicians."

STANLEY: Mediocre in a technical sense, sure. I mean, we had a lot of growing to do. But, hell we sounded better than most of the other bands coming out of New York at that time. And, if you listen, ain't nothing wrong with Strutter and Deuce and that stuff. Sounds pretty good to me. I think Kenny was probably more aware than some people about our limitations, because being in the studio with us, he knew that we wrote within our limitations. We wrote what we were capable of playing. But, hell! There's a lot of feeling in that stuff, and it's good stuff. I have no problems with that stuff. I have no problems listening to those records.

BRUTARIAN: Another thing Kenny said was that he found you frightening and intimidating at the audition. Was that part of the intention?

STANLEY: I guess it went along with it, but it wasn't the intention. All we ever wanted to do was be who we are. I guess on some level that could be intimidating. It's always been a lot

of fun to me.

BRUTARIAN: Did you have a lot of money behind you in the beginning? Kenny mentions a demo recorded at Electric Lady studios.

STANLEY: The demo that was cut at Electric Lady was done because somebody at Electric Lady owed Gene and me \$1000 for sessions that we had done. Gene and I sang on a car commercial. We should actually get a copy of that, somebody should unearth that. Gene and I sang on a AMC truck commercial in 1971. "The hot cars from AMC," that's what we were singing. It sounded like the stand up and cheer singers or something. So we did that and another commercial and we were owed some money,

and they couldn't pay. It wasn't AMC who couldn't pay, obviously. The people who's date it was couldn't pay us, so we said, instead of paying us, get us Eddie Kramer. He was the big hot shot engineer doing Zeppelin and everyone, walking around Electric Lady in a cape, ascot and a cane. We were petrified of this guy, but we said, get him to do the demo. So that's how the demo got done. There was no money behind us at that point. There was money behind us later, but that's why you

BRUTARIAN: I didn't know about the jingle work. I knew Gene was once a teacher.

sign with a record company.

become a teacher. I once wrote college paper was called the social significance of the panel graphic art form. My paper, trying to prove to the powers that be that comic

books can be a very effective means of teaching because when the kids are reading books, all they get are words. With comics, they're visually stimulated. They want to see pictures and colors and everything. To me there are one of three classic

American art forms. America can lay credit for creating three things that aren't European. I mean, there's rock n' roll, movies and comic books. That's our contribution to civilization really.

BRUTARIAN: Does being a fan have any impact on your work as a musician?

way the stage set is designed and the way we looked and dressed, especially when we put on the make-up. They were part of everything that we did in terms of the art work. Our album covers were pieces of art that were very much influenced by comics. Some of our album covers were actually drawn by there was a guy by the name of Ken Kelly who's still fairly active. We wanted Frank Frazetta, but he was too expensive so we told Kelly to do Frank Frazetta but let's have the figures move and pose the way Jack Kirby would pose them. So let's marry Kirby

and Frazetta, and you be responsible for making that happen. So we'd pose - we'd actually bring out old Fantastic Fours and show him. Actually more Captain Americas because there were less characters and we'd have the chance to you know really show Cap going through his motions. We'd actually be posing and he'd take photos and he drew over them. So comic books absolutely have an effect, still do. **BRUTARIAN:** Another thing Kenny mentioned is how other bands you worked with live tried to sabotage your live show, calling in the fire marshal for Gene's fire

STANLEY: We did our share, too. To be an opening act with bombs and smoke machines and a huge logo that says KISS hanging behind the headliner takes a lot of balls and a lot of smarts. I mean, today, nobody could get away with that kind of stuff, but at that point the headliner was usually playing with a KISS sign hanging behind him, because it was rigged and it was going to stay there. We had a road crew that was real dedicated, and made it clear that we were going to do things our

breathing, things of that nature.



way. It was our way or no way. We locked the road manager of a headlining band in an anvil case so that we could do what had to be done. But it was done in good fun, and it was done because egos can become so out of hand. That sounds great coming from me. But, I think it's real funny when you have a headlining band that is afraid of the opening act and instead of trying to become a better band, tries to tie the opening acts hands behind their back. I don't understand that kind of stuff. If you're afraid of the opening act, you've got some serious thinking to be doing. Maybe you should get your own act together, instead of trying to cheat the people who came to the show, and also getting in the way of the act who put a lot of time and effort into being who they are.

BRUTARIAN: Do you get to pick who opens for you?

STANLEY: Always have. Got a real good track record.

BRUTARIAN: On what basis do you pick? **STANLEY:** Who we like and who we think will give the audience a great show and a great package. We want somebody who, when people see them, will feel like they were worth being there to see. We've done pretty well. We've had Judas Priest, Iron Maiden, John Cougar, Tom Petty, Bob Seger,





Ted Nugent, AC/DC...

BRUTARIAN: Eric Bloom of Blue Oyster Cult said that he opened for KISS, and that years ago it was the other way around. Was it his manager you locked in the Anvil case?

STANLEY: No. Fortunes of war being what they will be, it was a year after that first show that they opened for us. A year after the show that we opened for them, they were our opening act.

BRUTARIAN: Speaking of fortunes of war, in the KISStory book you use the artists who drew the unauthorized book for Revolution. Didn't you have to take legal action to stop them from publishing that?

SIMMONS: That has been stopped. I mean the publisher was a nice guy. We met and I don't question that the people who worked on the books were actually big fans. They were doing it because they loved doing it, but nobody ever did the courteous thing by picking up the phone and saying. "Do you mind if we do this?" I protect KISS the same way you want to protect your signature. You want to be able to be the only person on the plant who can sign your name to anything. From our point of view, if anybody that puts out something with KISS on it, they're using our signature without our permission.

BRUTARIAN: And your service

SIMMONS: Well that's just semantics,

but I'm not anti-semantic. BRUTARIAN: Yeah. **SIMMONS:** As far as I'm concerned, my signature's my name. BRUTARIAN: Do you get a lot of

flack about the band's image concerning women? You joke about it in one of the long form videos you made a few years back.

STANLEY: Sometimes. There was a quote some time ago. A girlfriend of mine called me up, and she was laughing hysterically. She told me that I was in New Women Magazine. I don't know anything about this, obviously, but they seem to have a section where they give things thumbs up and thumbs down. To me, I'd think that these new liberated women would have better things to do that conduct witch hunts with thumbs up or thumbs down; I didn't know that's what liberation was all about. They had some ridiculous quote that I never said. I loved it anyway, but when I read it, I thought here are these women professing to be new and liberated women, and they don't even realize that before you quote somebody, you should at least call them to see if you are quoting them accu-

BRUTARIAN: What was the quote? **STANLEY:** It was something to the effect of I'm not interested in women in music, that they don't know what they're

> doing and they should do dishes, or something. Something really great. I thought it was wonderful.

BRUTARIAN: The attitude you're selling is obviously not the atti-

once in a while, but hell, for the most part what we're doing is good clean fun. Nobody gets hurt, everybody is respected in the morning. If you don't think I'll respect you in the morning, I'll let you sleep 'til lunch.

BRUTARIAN: I remember that video had kind of a mock warning label that said "this video contains material that will offend some and titillate others"

STANLEY: It was just good clean fun. **BRUTARIAN:** There were a couple of interesting things in that video, like the line about playing a benefit for the National Organization of Women, and the record company paying you to live out your fantasies.

STANLEY: In essence, a video sure is a good excuse to spend 12 hours with some of the best looking women you've ever seen. And, hell, the record company is paying us on top of it. I always insist on casting the women. I mean, if they're not friends before the video, they're friends after. Who knows better what I like than me?

BRUTARIAN: What does Gene have to say about that?

STANLEY: Gene's usually pretty much in agreement. I mean, when he's free, he does it too, but I can't remember him being too disappointed.



BRUTARIAN: You mention being featured on *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous* in the video. That wasn't a very rock and roll attitude...well, come to think of it, it is now...

STANLEY: If they were going to a film of me for *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous*, they'd have to film me walking down the street getting groceries. I mean, I don't subscribe to all that nonsense. I'm real happy and I've got everything I want. But there's no good rock and roll music made by people who are cut off from their fans

and surrounded by salaried yes men. My life is pretty normal. That's the way I want to keep it. I want to know my fans, I want to walk the street. All I ever wanted out of anything I've ever done is freedom, and I've got that. That's what rock and roll is all about. Rock and roll is singing about what's going on around you. If what's going on around you is servants serving you tea and cookies, I'm not sure there are a lot of people at K-Mart who can relate to that.

BRUTARIAN: You have a tremendous and loyal group of fans.

SIMMONS: We're fortunate and blessed to have the kind of fan base that no other group has. Perhaps the Grateful

Dead and no one else. **BRUTARIAN:** Do

they ever write you personal letters where they're suggesting things they'd like? When I used to edit *Rock Scene*, all the letters we'd get, they were defending you.

STANLEY: Sure! It's possible. That's what family's all about. I mean, if you're angry at your brother, that's one thing, but if somebody else is angry at your brother, you defend your brother. That's cool. If that's the way it works, that's the way it's sup-

posed to be. It's such a great sign that people care enough about something that they're willing to do that. I'm real happy and real proud to be judged by my friends and my enemies. And I'm real proud of both of them. 'Cause I seem to have the best balance of all. Great people who love us, and a lot of turds that don't.

Our army is the best. That goes without saying. I can't speak for anybody else, except to say that our fans are great people. They're great people, and the feeling that I get first hand when we're on stage is like nothing else. To see that many people and know we're into the same thing, and people appreciate what you're doing, hell, I appreciate what they're doing. I have to say that fans don't desert bands. Whether they mean to or not, sometimes bands desert fans. When a band either loses sight of who they are, or loses sight of what the fans want, the fans go.

BRUTARIAN: Can you give an example?

STANLEY: Well, records that you put out, from one to the next don't necessarily

sell the same amount. That's based on people not liking it as much as the much before. It's the music. People aren't buying spandex, they aren't buying smoke bombs, they're buying music, and if they don't think it's up to what they want, then they don't buy it. And more power to 'em. I respect people for that.

BRUTARIAN: It makes it harder to experiment. **STANLEY:** No, it makes it real exciting to take chances, and you also realize if you're wrong, you pay a price for it. And that's okay. No guts, no glory. But, I don't expect, if there's ever a Iull, it's usually because a band has found something else it wants to do for the moment, or a band isn't as focused as it should be. People are always looking for this years hula hoop. Once they play with it enough, they go back to what was good, or what they liked before. So, that's probably got a lot to do with why we're still around. SIMMONS: Music is such an all encompassing

such an all encompassing thing - so much time out of the day if you're in a band or if you're writing or doing anything, it's almost impossible to go through everything. The fans, the KISS Convention, the KISS fans being - you know that entire world. We're fortunate and blessed to have the kind of fan base that no other group



A knock at the door at

Tim Powers writing career has spanned twenty years since the publication of his first novel, The Skies Discrowned. Since then he's account a very impressive list of awards and award nominations beginning with the Philip K. Dick Award for best paperback original for The Avebis Gans (RECENTLY REISSUED IN A HANDSOME treade paperback) and continuing with NUMEROUS NOMINATIONS for the World FANIASY AWARD, THE NEBULA, AND MANY others. The Charnel House edition of Last Call was selected as "Most Collectible Book" by Barry Levin in his annual collectors awards. The Anchis Gairs has the distinction of being reprinted in hardcover by both British and U.S. publishing houses. When Mr. BRUTARIAN WAS REMARKING TO John Pelan on how much he was ENJOYING THE Anubis GATES, HE HAD NO way of knowing that one of the cur-RENT REIGNING MASHERS OF HARD-CORE HORROR AND ONE OF tHE fields MOST distinguished langasists were in fact, old buddies who'd hoisted maxy a brewski together at SF conventions in their wilder days; the subsequent interview is the result of fortuitous serendipity.

BRUIARIAN: Tim, your first novels
were swashbuckling SF, then you
wrote two highly regarded historical fantasies, then a post-apocalyptic SF novel,
then back to historical fantasy. Of late your
work seems to be set in more contemporary
venues, has this been by design?

Tim Powers: I've always taken SF to include "all of our stuff" - that is, Lovecraft as much as Gibson, A. Merritt as much as Dick. I've never really paid much attention to the subcategories like horror, dark fantasy, hard SF. But I've got to admit I seem to be specializing; it's no longer very likely that I'll write the big novel set on an orbiting colony, for example. I do seem to be writing historical fantasy that's drifting toward a sort of contemporary with strong links to the past. These days I'm cultivating Thomas Pynchon's territory as much as Leiber's!

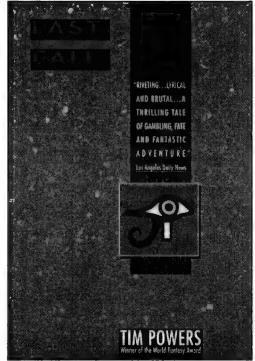
The novel I'm working on now is, I think, to be set in the 1950s, probably in London and Moscow and Beirut; it revolves around Kim Philby, the Brit who was high-up in Her Majesty's Secret Service but had secretly been a Soviet mole since his college days. So I guess now I'm ploughing John LeCarre's turf! - if not Ian

three in the morning...

Brutarian talks with Fantasy Master Tim Powers

by John Pelan

Fleming, even. It will be a fantasy, though, so there'll still be debts to Leiber and Lovecraft and Sturgeon.



Brutarian: One of the great consistencies in your work is the remarkable amount of background detail in your work, particularly in your historical fantasies. Could you tell us a bit about the research process that goes in to one of your books?

Tim Powers: I do research the daylights out of a project before I start; The Stress of Her Regard is a good example. I probably spent six months just reading - the journals and letters of Byron and Shelley and Keats and all their pals, and early 19th-century travel books about Rome and Venice, and all those big modern photo-books so that I could get a feel for locales. I probably had 30 views of the Piazza San Marco from various angles. And I had to research 19th Century medicine and surgery, particularly childbirth - I found a great book by Jon Kobler about John Hunter, a London surgeon who pioneered childbirthing. And of course I have to get old street maps of the cities involved, really the research almost becomes an end in itself, and there always come a point when I've got to tell myself when the writing of an actual book is supposed to be involved here too.

Brutarian: With the publication of Last Call, and with some of your short fiction; you seem to moving more into the realm of contemporary fantasy. Is the research process somewhat easier than with historical material, or is it actually a bit more difficult? Tim Powers: I believe I thought contemporary books would not require as much research if so, I was wrong. The big difference is everybody will know if I get a detail wrong! Police procedures, the electronics of telephones, televisions, and telegraphs, modern medicine and surgery, real restaurants and casinos of modern cities, dope culture-! Even gambling: I could see that Last Call needed to be about Poker, but at the time I realized that I didn't even know if a straight

beat a flush. In fact, my Poker research was so extensive I haven't stopped, even though the book is long past.

Brutarian: I talk to a number of booksellers on a regular basis that report the same phenomena; their customers, regardless of their usual bias, be it SF, Fantasy, or Horror, will usually pick up your books regardless of the category that the packaging would seem to indicate. You've readers who normally will purchase books only in a specific genre, but they'll always pick up your titles as well. The end result seems that you've managed to avoid the stigma of having any particular label attached to your work. How do you classify your work, or do you?

Tim Powers: I just write in the category which is "all our stuff" and then I see in reviews that one of them is regarded as horror, another as historical fantasy, another as plain fantasy, or dark, or something. I don't really think in terms of the sub-categories - though it always is "our stuff", i.e. not main-stream.

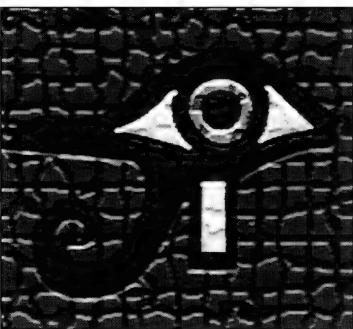
And it's not magical realism, either, though I don't mind that description since it has such an air of respectability theses days. Magical realism seems to be just fantasy without any obligation to tie up the loose ends or be plausible.

Sometimes I say I write hard fantasy, that is, fantasy with an obligation to acknowledge science. I'd never have a totally invisible man who could see by the visible spectrum of light, for example; nor ever have someone's hair turn white overnight; and I try to keep an eye on the conservation of this-or-that laws; and if I have a 3-inch tall

man show up, I'll have given a lot of thought to how much he weighs, how his muscles work, how much brain he's got.

Brutarian: You've been referred to as "the most collectible author" in the field; and I think that thus far you've had the distinction of nearly every one of your books presented as a signed limited edition. Could you tell us a bit about your involvement with the small press and how it started?

Tim Powers: You started me in the small presses, John! When we were talking in Seattle in '86 and you said you wanted to start a small press, and I told you I had a short story that had been rejected by every publisher in the country. Those were great



times, the early days of Axolotl Press - do you remember the signed T-shirts?

It's been very flattering, having small presses put together put together elegant editions of my stuff - and though I've kicked the collector habit myself, I do still remember the sort of eagerness a collector feels at phrases like, "One of 26 copies with an original illustration by the author tipped in ..." So I get a kind of vicarious kick out of having such things made of my books.

Joe Stefko and Tracy Cocoman at Charnel House do work that would have delighted Roy Squires, who was probably the premier fine-press publisher in our field (though his productions were much smaller things than the tomes Charnel House makes), and he appreciated the Doves, and Kelmscott and Fountain Presses. The fact that Stefko and Cocoman have never won a World Fantasy Award for their work is a genuine shame.

Altogether I'm real pleased to have most

of my books so imposingly leather-bound and slipcased and illustrated!

Brutarian: Ah yes, the signed Axolotl Press T-shirts, I'm afraid that mine doesn't fit as well as it once did. I do recall that when I started Axolotl, one of the things that was so unique was the fact that we published a short story by you in chapbook form. To date, you've written over twice as many novels as short stories; and of course I've a purely selfish reason for asking this, but do you plan on any more short fiction?

Tim Powers: When I have written short sto-

ries, they've all either been vignettes or telescoped novels. I don't instinctively have the scope of a short story in mind when I come

up with a plot. In fact, as time goes by, I find myself writing longer and longer novels! It may derive from a kind of selfishness or self-indulgence. I want to throw in every amplified idea.

Brutarian: Youíve done a couple of projects in collaboration with James P. Blaylock, are there any plans for a longer more ambitious project? And is the collaborative process something comes easily for you two?

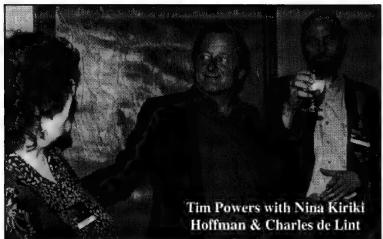
Tim Powers: With Blaylock I can write short stories. Working together, we seem to write in that form pretty naturally, and I suppose he is very good at that form and keeps me in line.

Blaylock is the only person I can imagine collaborating with.

We've known each other since '72, traveled together in old Volkswagens, tried to fix various old cars, drunk oceans of beer, and seen decimations in the same crowds of friends over the decades; and our publishing careers have been parallel, dealing with the same editors and business surprises; and we've critiqued each other's work since long before either of us had published anything, to the extent that I think that either of us could take a lot of credit for the other guy's collected works.

I'd love to collaborate on a novel with him, but a publisher would have to pay the two years' living expenses for both of us!

Brutarian: During the 80's in the explosion of shared-world anthologies, your name was somewhat conspicuous by its' absence. Have you ever toyed with the idea of participating in a project of that type, where someone else has laid out all the groundwork,



and done all the research, and so on? Would that be an interesting experience, or somewhat stifling?

Tim Powers: My big reason for not participating in "shared-world" stuff is that I hardly ever do short fiction. But at the same time I have a sort of reluctance. I want to make up the world, and be free to change it any way I want, and kill off or alter any character as I please. And if a story is part of a shared-world project, I'm always afraid that it couldn't stand alone, but would always have to appear in the context of the various other writers' stories.

I would like, though, to write a real Cthulhu mythos story, or a Travis McGee story; or a Fafhrd-&-Grey-Mouser story. But they'd be ... fun side-projects, you know?..Not my actual work.

Brutarian: You've had the opportunity you teach Clarion a couple of times as well as the Writers of the Future as an instructor and participate in the "workshop process". I've always sort of taken the approach that the only really valid critic is the editor that you're submitting to; after all, he/she is the one writing the check. Do you think that the "workshop process" is beneficial or that people can get caught up in trying to please their peers, who after all, aren't actually going to buy the story, no matter how much they may like the end result.

Tim Powers: Yeah, I've taught Clarion four times — and will taking the last two weeks of it again this summer, co-teaching with Karen Joy Fowler — and I've twice cotaught the Writers of the Future workshop, when it was in Sag Harbor in New York. I have found that there can be a whole lot of real benefit for beginning writers in getting a dumptruck-full of accumulated advice and experience from writers who are further along the road. It's desperately hard work, though — nobody at Clarion ever gets eight

hours of sleep a night— and you do need students who already have the talents for writing. Clarion can't make a writer, just enlarge one.

And you need the focused duration— in the space of a week's worth of sixteen-hour days you can not only convey what should be done to

improve a story, but a big part of why. In a normal, less-purposefully-stressed situation, I'd agree that the only person to show a story to is an editor, who can express approval in the sincere-&-considered form of a check.

I do tell students not to do a workshop again— and I don't really see value in writ-

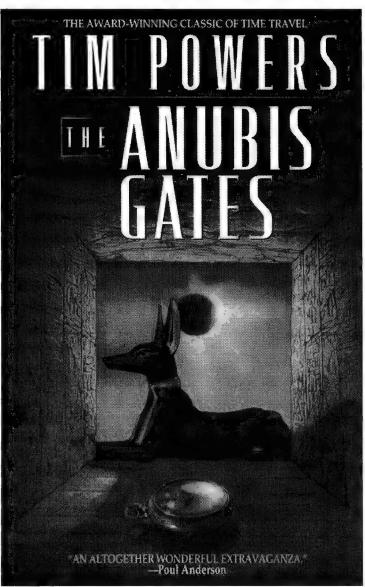
ers' groups. Once you know how to ride that bike, throw away the training wheels.

I've got to say that, even with the daunting amount of work involved, I do love teaching writing: conveying the interesting things I've learned to people who (A.) are interested, and (B.) are able to do something with them. Yesterday, as I write this, my book Expiration Date, which was a finalist for the Nebula Award, didn't win - a book by one of "my" Clarion students did! Nicola Griffith, whose Slow River was the winner. was in the first Clarion class I taught at, in '88. And there really is something very satisfying about seeing someone you've taught beat you out. I wasn't the only teacher that year, of course, and Nicola was a very good writer when she arrived but I'll always claim to have taught her everything she knows.

Brutarian: You were friends with Philip K. Dick, was he a great influence on you as a writer?

Tim Powers: I don't honestly know if Dick was an influence on my writing or not. I love his books, and he was one of my best friends— but my own books are much more modest in scope. Tom Whitmore wrote a good introduction to— a limited edition! — of my second book, An Epitaph in Rust, in which he made a good case for my being influenced by Dick's work, and when I squint I think I can see that a character like Sol Shadroe in Expiration Date probably owes a lot to Dick's wonderfully quirky characters; characters; but I'm much more aware of the influences of Kingsley Amis, and Fritz Leiber.

Brutarian: A recurring theme in your books seems to be the "regular guy" who is forced by circumstances into heroic action. A



theme I find very reminiscent of the *Hornblower* novels or the works of Rafael Sabatini. Did either author have any influence on you?

Tim Powers: I actually haven't read the *Hornblower* books, but yeah, Sabatini has had a real powerful effect on my writing—especially, of course on *On Stranger Tides*. I love that bravura style, that Cyrano flavor; *The Wind and the Lion* is one of my favorite movies.

My protaganists do tend to be "ordinary Joes." I want the reader, and me, to identify with them, not just be indulging in a euphoric (Heinlein) or melancholy (Donaldson) daydream. And my characters are forced into dramatic problems as reluctantly as I would be myself.

Brutarian: Most of your fantasy novels contain variations on some of the classic archetypes of the horror story, voodoo, ghosts, evil sorcerors, etc. and of course, your protaganists are usually in very dire situations from which they rarely emerge unscathed. Of course, what I'm describing could be the attributes of the horror genre, have you ever thought of yourself as a horror writer? Tim Powers: No, I don't think of myself as a horror writer. I do have scenes that I might describe as horror, but the totality has, I like to think, as much funny stuff too, and plain intrigue and save-the-heroine stuff. Horror always strikes me as pure effect, like a violin solo— I think of "The Color Out of Space," or The Shining, or M.R. James' stories. Wonderful stuff, but I'm running a kind of carnival-in addition to the Chamber of Horrors ride I've got snack stands and ring-tosses and tattoo booths and drunks fighting out in the parking lot.

Brutarian: There's an emphasis in today's horror fiction on the psychological aspects, on the "monster within" or



just simply the random violence which is prevelant in most of our cities, what do you find terrifying?

Tim Powers: I think it was Bela Lugosi who, when asked what was the scariest thing he could imagine, said "A knock at the door at three in the morning, and when you open the door there's a clown standing there." There's a real flavor of paranoid-schizophrenia in good horror; a sense of vertigo and disorientation when you discover evidence that impossible things are in fact possible, and they're out in your yard.

I've had friends say that urban gangs, or atomic warfare, are scarier than the supernatural, and certainly the splatterpunk writers were trying to get by with gore and sadists and the rest of the eyeball-on-a-corkscrew kit—but to me that's just some sub-catagory of crime fiction, or suspense fiction; more related to Thomas Harris than Lovecraft and James. It can be great stuff—I love Harris—but it's not the same catagory as Lovecraft and James. Fear of your dead grandmother whispering to you out of an unplugged TV set in the middle of the night might not be a rational fear, but it can be a much bigger one than the fear of a gang-boy with a knife.

Brutarian: Of course you read widely outside of "our stuff"; which current writers do you enjoy? And are there any horror novels that have managed to convey to you that sense of the unexplainable, that clown-at-the-door wrongness...?

Tim Powers: Now that Amis and Leiber and John D.

MacDonald are dead, I think my favorite living writer is

Tom Wolfe. I love LeCarre —I think Tinker, Tailor is a

truly great book— and Dick Francis is always fun, and
I'm constantly reading some example or other of non-fiction from Asimov and C.S. Lewis. In "our field". I somehow don't keep up with my contemporaries much —my
favorites are still Leiber and Dick and Sturgeon and
Lovecraft.

The only books that ever really made me scared at night were Hodgson's *The House on the Borderland* and King's *The Shining*.

BRUIARIAN: You've written before about the "circus spectacle" present in some of the best of "our stuff"; I'm thinking of the protaganistis roller-coaster ride to Hell in Michael Shea's Niffi the Lean, the enormity of Gormenghast in Mervyn Peake's books, the kaliedescopic

panorama delinated in Clark Ashton Smith's The Hashish Eater, Blaylock's giant shoe floating in to the beach, that sort of thing; when done well, we not only believe; we clutch our bags of popcorn and sit on the edge of seats in anticipation of the next magnificent stunt. This element is certainly present in your books; that sense of awe and wonder that pervades any well crafted fantasy world. Which other writers seem to capture that feeling on a regular basis?

Tim Powers: Thomas Pynchon is good for that circus spectacle that stays with you—I'm thinking of V and The Crying of Lot 49. And certainly Marquez's A Hundred Years of Solitude. Leiber's Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser stories, too, and all the Zothique and Averoigne type stuff of Clark Ashton Smith's

...Gibson's Sprawl, Lovecraft's New England... and I'm certain I'll love Gene Wolfe's stuff when I get to it!

That is what I value in our field—that sense of a whole world, full of outre-but-self-consistent wonders, with towers and taverns and marching bands and unhuman people, and that roller-coaster sense of vertigo I get when I find myself believing it all. I'm always impatient to see beginning writers try to mute the circus aspect of it all, as if the noise of the Ferris-wheel calliope might drown out the tepid problems of their serious characters; I say just put your serious characters on stilts and set their heads on fire in addition to their other problems.

Though it was the most important appointment of his life, Winter was not prepared for the innocuous pastry shop or the plump, aproned man who stood behind a counter.

"Yes, may I help you?" Winter rubbed his arm, smelling the rich fragrance

of bread, rolls, and doughnuts. He glanced at the only customer, who was eyeing some eclairs in a sidecase.

"I'm Steve Morrison," he finally said, repeating what the man on the phone had told him to say. "I called last night about a special order. A...birthday cake for my son."

"Ah, yes, Mr. Morrison." The man smiled, then emerged from behind the counter. "Will you come with me, please?"

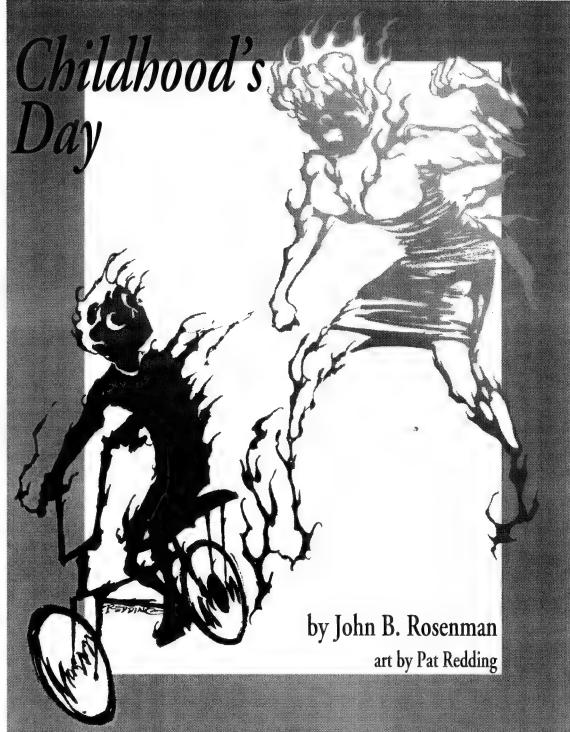
He ushered Winter through a door, where a pretty young woman met them. "Please go with Ms. Starret. She'll see that you're taken care of."

As the man returned to the bakery, Winter nervously followed Ms. Starret to a room with an inclined couch, where she smiled and told him to lie down. What had he heard such rooms called? Oh yes, "birthing chambers." However, he knew it would not be that kind of birth, or rather, that it would be something both more and less than a birth.

Ms. Starret touched him gently. "Are you comfortable, Mr. Morrison?"

"Yes."

"Fine." She smiled and fitted his index finger into a plastic sheath on one of the arms, then pressed a button. "This is a genescan. It will read and analyze every gene in your system. Basically, we use it to detect any problems or irregularities. If none are found, we transplant a clonenucleus from one of your cells into a surrowomb, where it will be nurtured and grow over a period of three weeks." She picked up an electrical attachment and placed it around his head. "In addition, selected data



stored in your brain will be transferred to a holding unit and later transferred, in turn, to your reprograph's...'

He raised a hand. "Please, it's not necessary to explain

everything."

She smiled, making him feel rude. "As you wish, Mr. Morrison. But I will need some information before we proceed." She moved to a computer and began to type into it. "First, what is the precise age you want your

reprograph to be?"

He inhaled deeply, remembering the day his father had died. It had been shortly before Winter's seventh birthday.

'Seven."

"Exactly?"

"Maybe a couple months after seven. I don't want this to be on his birthday."

"I understand. Sex?"

"Sex?"

"Of your reprograph. We are now able to produce an

opposite-sex version of the subject."

"I didn't know that. Uh, male." He licked his lips.

"One thing I've been meaning to ask. How will it—I mean, he—feel?" He tried to imagine what it would feel like to be "born" at the age of seven and couldn't. "Won't it be traumatic? I mean..."

She smiled, patted his shoulder. "Mr. Morrison, your reprograph will be thoroughly conditioned, so that any trauma will be minor."

"But ... "

"At the same time, I assure you that his feelings and memories, will be yours." She patted him again. "Now, if you have no other questions, perhaps we should begin."

He spread his fingers on the couch's smooth surface.

"Just one. What about the limitations of your technology? Isn't it true you can't create a reprograph that will last for more than..."

Ms. Starret's smile froze. "If reprography had been legalized and funded, we would have overcome such problems. But religious and other groups called it godless technology and closed their eyes to all we had to offer." She sighed. "Shall we begin, Mr. Winter?"

He stiffened. As his wife tearfully stressed, prolonged psychiatric treatment had failed and his depression about the past was only getting worse. When his psychiatrist himself, an old friend, had told him their progress had "plateaued," and given him a phone number and address, Winter had known it was his last chance. But was he willing to risk going to prison for it?

He swallowed. What did he have left to lose? More importantly, what did he have to look forward to if he didn't

He looked at Ms. Starret, forcing himself to relax. "Yes," he heard himself say,

"I'm ready." He lay on the couch for the six hours required by the "procedure." The woman had said they were transplanting a nucleus to an artificial womb. That meant the technicians were reproducing his genes. Each and every single one of them. How many genes were there, anyway? Thousands? Millions? Certainly there were enough so that each individual human being was a very, very rare thing in the universe. As it was, you could never expect the same exact mix to appear

twice, not even after a billion chances, not even with multiple births such as twins. And the same applied to childhood, too, didn't it? Once a person's childhood was gone, it was gone forever and nothing could bring it back.

Nothing. Ever.

That is, until the wonders of modern technology came

along that supposedly went beyond even genes and captured the individual soul itself, as well as past, even painful experiences that the person had either forgotten or still remembered too clearly.

Winter sighed and carefully took a photograph from his wallet. It was the only picture he kept there, and it showed a little blond boy with freckles, held in the arms of a man who stood smiling into eternity. They looked very happy in each other's company.

Winter's eyes moistened as he recalled that Nell was infertile and they could have no children of their own, regardless of any combination of genes.

Today was the day.

His wife had offered to accompany him, but for some reason he told Nell he wanted to come alone. It was warmer than it had been three weeks ago, and this time Ms. Starret put him in another room and gave him some orange juice. Apparently, the procedure had been successful, from the implantation of his cell in a surrowomb to "bioconditioning" the result to cope with its—no, hissudden expulsion into the world with a complete set of memories, attitudes, and feelings. To be born this way at the age of seven must be difficult indeed, but there was a

final reality about the child's existence which Winter didn't want to contemplate, so he grabbed a magazine from the table and started turning the pages.

He was on his third magazine when Ms. Starret interrupted him. "Mr. Morrison?"

He looked up. "Yes." She smiled. "Are you ready to meet him?"

Winter rose numbly. Though he wanted a drink badly, he struggled for calm. "It's over? He's...here?"

"Oh yes, the procedure was quite successful." She approached and took his arm. "Shall we?"

Fighting panic, he thought of running. "What...what happens later? I mean, when..."

"We come collect him at your home if you want."

"But how do you know...that is, how do you know when it's time?"

She pressed his arm. "I assure you, Mr. Morrison, we'll know." She smiled brightly. "Now, are you ready?"

He inhaled deeply, his body drenched in sweat. Finally, he nodded.

"Good." She guided him from the room into a narrow, dimly lit hallway. Eventually a door opened and she led him into the bright light of another room. He blinked, imagining he heard a baby cry.

After a moment he could see better. A technician stood there holding the hand of a little blond boy with freckles. The boy was wearing short pants just like those Winter used to wear.

Winter's legs went watery, and he felt himself sway. Ms. Starret steadied him, murmured something soothing.

The boy smiled, looking far more comfortable than he.

"Hi!"

Winter gulped. "Hi, John," he croaked.

"Not John, Jack. It's what all the kids call me—or used to. Okay, John?"

That's right, he had been called Jack! But that was more than thirty years ago.



Dazed, Winter took a step forward, realizing that all this child's friends had long since grown up or died. "Sure, Jack," he said. "Whatever you want."

In the car, he finally found the courage to look at the child directly and say what he felt.

"You're me, you know."
"Yes." Delicate, pink
lips—his lips—curled in a
smile. "They made me know.
The uh, conditchening..."

Despite himself, Winter smiled. "Conditioning."

"Yeah." Jack grinned, and Winter recognized the wide gap between the boy's two front teeth. Why, his own teeth had looked exactly the same, requiring three years of braces to correct the problem!

"You..." Winter faltered, then tried again. "Does your conditioning tell you why you're here? Why I..."

A childlike shrug. "I know they made me from you and you want me here for some reason." Another shrug. "That's all."

"And it doesn't bother you being here, just waking up to find..."

"Why should it?" The boy reached out and took Winter's hand, lifting it to study the broad, hairy knuckles and the scar on back from a hunting accident. Then Jack turned it over and fit his small palm tightly against Winter's. It looked lost there, and Jack glanced up, giggling.

Leaning forward, Winter studied the boy's face. Freckles like "cow plops," as his first girlfriend had once teased him. Smooth skin without even a trace of fuzz. Had his own skin ever seemed so fragile and ephemeral? And was this the way he had once looked? Yes, surely it must be, though come to think of it, did anyone really know how he looked during the fleeting days of childhood? In fact, would he even have noticed anything strange about this boy if he had not known the truth?

Jack raised a hand and touched Winter's cheek. Though he'd shaved that morning, he already had a stubble.

"Gee, it's thick," Jack said. Eyes blue as his own widened. "Is it hard to shave off?"

C'mon, Jack," Winter said quickly, "let's get you home. There's someone I want you to meet."

At home, Nell was sitting on the front porch. Winter saw her rise as they left the car and walked toward her through the bright summer

He stopped at the bottom of the steps leading up to the porch. "Nell, I'd, uh, like you to meet Jack."

Nell laughed nervously. Descending the steps, she knelt before the boy so that their faces were level.

"Hi, Jack," she said, "I'm Nell."

Winter saw Jack hesitate before giving her a wide, gap-toothed smile. "Hi, Mrs. Winter."

"Oh, don't call me that!"
Nell's hands rose and fluttered about the boy, touching
his arms and shoulders, lighting briefly on his cheeks.
Watching them, Winter felt a
pang of regret.

"Uh, Nell, maybe we should go inside."

Her hands continued to flutter about the boy like restless birds, lightly touching. "What, John?"

"I said, 'maybe we should go inside."

"Oh. Of course!" She rose, darting him a smile that returned instantly to the boy, who waited patiently. "Come on, Jack. Would you like some milk and cookies?"

Jack grinned. "You bet!"
"Good!" She took his
hand, and led him up the

As they disappeared inside, Winter realized his wife had harbored a motive of her own for "having" this child. The boy wasn't just for his benefit—it was for hers too! But when you thought about her interest in Jack, it made no

sense. Didn't she realize...

What about you? he thought. Do your hopes make any more sense? Do you really believe there's a chance that Jack can give you what you seek, whatever it is? Do you really believe he can free you?

He picked a petal off a blossom. Yes, of course there's a chance. There must be. And unlike Nell, who seemed to have forgotten, he knew the boy couldn't stay

long

Sighing, he climbed the steps and entered the house. In the kitchen, Nell already had Jack at the table, drinking milk and munching from a mound of cookies that could have fed a whole troop of boys. Winter glanced at the clock. Four-thirty. If she wasn't careful, she'd spoil Jack's dinner.

Nell didn't seem to care. Winter watched her pull out a chair and excitedly sit down beside the child. In her hands she held the family album she had wanted so much to fill.

"Jack," she said breathlessly, "I want you to look at something."

Jack put the glass down, a white half-moon rimming his upper lip. "You do?"

"Yes!" She opened the album, riffling the pages till she found what she wanted. "Look, here's a picture of John when he was your age!"

The boy looked at it politely, then smiled up at Winter, who felt a growing disquiet. Something was wrong. The boy acted older than his age. It was as if he had been programmed to please them, to be polite and cooperative. Yet it didn't quite ring true.

Come on, he told himself. This situation is bizarre, and you've been thinking and dreaming of little else for the past month, investing all your hope and emotion in this day. Of course the boy seems strange. It would be surprising if he didn't!

And yet, he had never acted this way when he was seven, had he?

No, but then, he had never been "conditioned," either.

And how was a child, under such circumstances, supposed to act?

"Here's another one, Jack." Nell moved closer, kissed the boy on the cheek. "Jack was eight here, the year he went to scout camp."

This time, Jack seemed to study the album with genuine interest. "Gosh, he looks just like me! But his uniform's so stiff, it looks like his head's gonna pop off!" Nell laughed so hard her face turned red. Then she rose and snatched Winter's hand, pulling him away. "He's perfect!" she whispered. "He's just like I always imagined you'd be as a child!" Still laughing, she glanced possessively back at the boy who sat turning pages at the table. "He's a little you, isn't he? The you I always loved but could only imagine. And he's here with us!"

"Nell..." He stopped, seeing pain flicker in her face. If only they'd been able to have children, or even adopt!

The next moment her face softened, losing its sadness. With surprise, he saw concern for him enter it. She stole another glance at Jack, then moved closer to Winter.

"I'm sorry," she said. "I forgot. I didn't mean to be so selfish!"

"You realize..."

"Yes, yes, of course! It's just for a while, and this is all for you. Not for me at all. It's just..." Her hand rose, caressed his cheek. "John, I think it's not just that he's a child, but that he's you as you once were, that made me go over the edge. I promise it won't happen again." He smiled, feeling his love for her struggle up through

the guilt that had haunted him for so long.

"Do you think..."
"What, John?" She blinked back tears.

Do you think you could call me Jack, just once? he wanted to say. But though it was a small request, he sensed he shouldn't make it. Her eyes continued to probe his. "What is it, John?" He shrugged. "Oh, nothing. It's

just—well, do you think that I could have some milk and cookies?"

After Jack had eaten, the doorbell rang. When Winter answered it, he had a surprise. A small boy with a football stood on the porch.

"Yes?"

The boy rubbed his nose, leaving a smudge on it. "Hey, I saw a kid come in. Can he play?"

"I...'

"Who is it, John?"

Winter turned to see Nell and Jack approach. "It's, uh,

a boy.'

"A boy?" Jack tugged his hand from Nell's and hurried forward. When he reached Winter, he stopped and stared through the screen door at the other boy.

"Hi," the visitor said. "Ya

wanna play?"

Jack's eyes brightened. "Sure!" He stopped and looked up at Winter. "That

is, if it's O.K.'

Winter raised his hand and stroked Jack's hair. As he did, he caught the scent of the breeze through the screen door. It smelled rich and vast with promise, like an unexplored summer day when he had been a boy. But Winter didn't want Jack to go, to run off bloodying his knees and scraping his arms Godknows-where, taking this precious time with him. There were things he wanted to ask Jack now, things he must say while there was time. When Winter didn't answer, Jack craned his head around, his eyes pleading. "Please, Nell, can I? I'll just be a while, and I promise I won't leave the front yard!"

As the boy on the porch waited for the adults to decide, he amused himself by raising a foot and grabbing his sneaker with his hand. Winter watched him twist his limber young body like a pretzel, all the while swaying precariously on one foot.

Turning, Winter met his wife's eyes. You want to see him play with another kid, don't you? he thought. Pretend for a moment it's our son playing. Though Nell's eyes responded, It's up to you, John, they were unable to conceal her need.

Winter looked down at Jack again and saw another need, a desire like that of any other kid to play with someone his own age. And since Jack would soon be leaving, how could Winter refuse him?

"Sure," he said. "Go ahead!"

Jack grinned and pushed the screen door open. Together, the boys ran down the steps into the yard.

"John," Nell said, "we don't know his name."

Winter sighed. "What difference does it make?" He held his arm out and Nell came to him, pressing against his side. Silently they watched the boys toss the football back and forth.

"My name's Ron!" "Mine's Jack."

"I didn't know there was a kid livin' here!"

Jack's last toss sailed over Ron's head, eliminating the need to answer.

"Oh John," Nell whispered. "I know." He pressed her closer. "Let's pretend, huh? Just for a while."

She nodded, and they stood there pretending. Now and then a bird chirped. Wind soughed in the trees, bringing the sweet smell of grass. Gradually, as twilight approached, Winter found he could almost believe. After all, Jack had fooled his playmate, hadn't he?

"Man, you got a strong arm! Where'd you learn to throw?"

Winter, who'd played quarterback in college, saw Jack turn to him in the half-dark. "My dad taught me," he said.

Winter's heart lurched.

My dad.

Smack. Smack. Smack. Again and again they threw and caught the ball. Winter watched it rise and fall until he could barely see it.

"HEY, RONNIE!" a man's voice suddenly called. "IT'S GETTING DARK—YOU BETTER GET IN HERE!" "Uh-oh, gotta go!" Ron

caught the football one last time and started to run. Then he stopped. "See ya tomorrow, Jack?" he asked shyly. Jack lowered his head. "Maybe."

"Great!" Ron ran off, taking his football with him.

Winter had planned to talk to the boy in private, but somehow the three of them began playing Scrabble in the living room. To Winter's surprise, Jack played with great enthusiasm and considerable skill, beating Nell easily and coming in second both times. By the third game Winter felt guilty and let Jack win, which he did with the word CELE-BRATE, built cleverly from Winter's tiles.

As Nell put the game away, Jack giggled and clapped his hands. "Beat ya, Dad!"

"You sure did...son." Trading a glance with Nell, he reached out and ruffled Jack's hair. So young, and so vulnerable! Suddenly he felt that if only he'd had a son, his entire life might have been different. He might have been able to make up for what happened to his father by seeing that he himself was the best possible par-

Jack giggled again and hugged Nell. Yes, it was as if this boy truly were himself reborn, and Winter felt a great desire to protect and shelter him from the remorseless future. After all, day by day, Jack would grow up to become him, everything in his young, carefree life poisoned by an indelible memo-

But then Jack's expression changed, and Winter realized the boy never would grow up. This wasn't Jack, only a high-tech illusion.

Wait a minute. That wasn't right either. The "store" had guaranteed that Jack shared his exact memories and feelings. This very minute the boy not only remembered everything about that terrible day, but remembered it

far more vividly than he

did. To Jack the memory was raw, his father having died just a few months ago.

Jack yawned.

Nell gasped, and Winter tensed. He checked his watch. 10:30! How had time passed so quickly? Was Jack supposed to tire so soon? Winter knew he'd better act now before it was too late.

"Hey." he said, "want some ice cream?"

"Sure! What kind?" "Your favorite." "Oh boy, would I!"

Winter forced a smile. "Nell, would you excuse us?" Avoiding her stricken face, he rose and led Jack to the kitchen.

Jack sat down eagerly at the table. "Black walnut ice cream...Mmmm-mmm! Dad, do you 'member the first time

Winter went to the refrigerator and took out the quart of black walnut. He set it before Jack along with a bowl and spoon, and sat

you bought me some?"

"Jack, I never bought you any."

"Did too!" His tongue squirmed like an eel between his lips as he opened the box and started to spoon huge chunks into his bowl. "It musta been years ago. Anyway, black walnut's your favorite too."

"No, it used to be. Now it's butter pecan."

Winter watched Jack spoon ice cream into his mouth at an alarming rate, and cleared his throat. "Jack, it was our father who gave you black walnut, not me.' Jack didn't answer. The spoon rang against the bowl again and again.

He reached out and stopped Jack's hand. "Jack, doesn't it bother you?"

"Huh?"

He swallowed. "Your father, Jack. Our father. Doesn't it bother you what happened to him?"

"My father? You're my

Winter shook his head. "Think, Jack. Remember. This is important to me." He moved closer. "Do you recall the day he died?"

"I...don't wanna think about that." "You have to."

"No, I don't!" Tears sprang into the blue eyes, searing Winter with shame. How could he do this? The boy would have to leave soon, and it was cruel to torment him.

But it was also necessary, for he must be heartless. After all, this wasn't about Jack's needs but his own. The boy was a convenience, a thing. "Reprograph" might seem to be the wrong word to describe him because it referred to a photograph of a photograph. But that's how insubstantial Jack was. In fact, he wasn't even that, but only an ephemeral imitation of the real thing. His sole purpose was to help Winter come to terms with the past. Once he did, he could dispose of the boy like an empty box of ice

He squeezed Jack's hand. "Do you remember the day your father died? He was driving down the street."

"Please, I don't-"

"He was driving down the street. Can you tell me what happened then, Jack?"

The boy seemed to wilt. "I was on my bike and wasn't looking. I..." "Yes?"

"I...rode out just as he passed. He

turned to miss me, but there was a pole. He hit it head on. He was...'

"Killed instantly, Jack," Winter finished. "Your mother..."

"She wore black for weeks, and she never lets me forget," Jack whispered, slipping into the present tense.

Winter waited. Yes, that was what happened, but what did he expect to accomplish by making Jack dredge it up? How did he expect the boy to help him when in the last thirty-odd years he hadn't been able to help himself? What did he seek from Jack, some insight or truth he'd missed? Or was it absolution? Was Jack's purpose to forgive him, to tell him it was all right and that he had finally suffered enough? Did he expect to bathe in the holy water of Jack's words and be reborn? If so, he was a deluded fool, for as he knew, Jack wasn't even a person. He was only an illusion that couldn't help anyone.

Winter released the boy's hand, his hopes tasting like ashes. He'd been so blind, so stupid!

"Mom never lets me forget," Jack said. "Every day she tells me how bad I am, how it's all my fault, how I'm a rotten son." He sniffed. "But I never meant to do it. I was just careless."

What was the boy saying? Winter thought. His mother had never harped

on the accident. She would never have been so cruel as to remind him of his guilt day after day.

"Jack," he said. "Our mother never did that."

"Oh Dad, don't you remember? Almost every day she comes to my room. She...she slaps me, says I killed my own

father!"

Winter shook his head. "No, Jack, she never—

Jack seized his hand, his small fingers pressing into his large ones. "The last time was just yesterday. She...she said I'd done it on purpose!" His smooth face twisted. "I...I can't forget it, Dad. How can you?"

Dad. Jack was simply confused. He wasn't the boy's father. The man who had swerved his car to miss him was. But the worst thing was that Jack was speaking such terrible madness. How could he say these things about histheir-mother? She'd always been loving and kind, and had never-

"Dad, don't you remember?" Jack asked. "She said it was all our fault!"

Winter started to protest again, but suddenly an image filled his mind. His bedroom door opened and his mother entered with a grim look on her face. Quietly, she closed the door and came



toward him. Raised her hand...

Winter moaned deeply, closing his eyes while Jack stroked his hand and tried to console him. No, it wasn't true! It was impossible! But God help him, now Jack wasn't the only one who was confused because he was remembering other times when his mother had hurt and reminded him of the accident. "It's because of you that I'm alone, Jack," she'd said. And again, screaming in his face: "You're a terrible boy. I'll never forgive you!"

He swayed on the chair, the air suddenly sucked out of him so he couldn't breathe. His heart faltered, then began pounding feverishly, flooding his chest and stomach with burning warmth as if he were going to explode. Hotter and hotter it grew as all the events he'd blanked out so long before rained down upon him in a series of blows. His mother, his mother, his mother! His skin flushed, burst into a sheen of sweat that covered his entire body.

"Dad, I'm sleepy."
Breathe! He couldn't
breathe! Clutching his stomach, Winter managed to
snatch a little air. His heart

lurched, then raced on.

"Dad, are you all right?" Finally Winter's heart began to slow. He drew frantic lungfuls of air and opened his eyes, blinking against the bright light. He must...he must get a grip on himself, cope with all this later! Make sense of it so he could change his life.

"Dad, I'm sleepy," Jack said.

Winter sat up, wiped his streaming face. "Are...are you, Jack?"

The boy nodded dully.

Winter rose, pressing his stomach. For a long moment he gazed down at the boy. So small and vulnerable he was, and even more fleeting than dandelion fluff in the wind.

Stooping, he picked Jack up and cradled him against his chest. "Let's go to bed, son," he said.

When he reached the bedroom they'd set aside, Winter found that Nell had prepared it during the day. There were football pennants on the wall, including one for Winter's own school. She'd even filled a vase with forget-menots and bought a colorful blanket covered with space-ships. Setting Jack down on it, Winter helped him undress and get into the pajamas they had purchased.

Once Jack was under the covers, Winter wondered what he should do next. Tell Jack a story? The boy was barely awake. Nell herself had disappeared, leaving them alone.

"I'm glad," Jack whispered.

He sat on the bed. "What?"

"I'm glad you decided to have me."

Winter's mouth opened in amazement. He had given Jack so little, even hurt him. What could he possibly be glad about?

Jack touched Winter's hand, his breathing barely stirring the covers. "You're my dad, not the other man. You are."

"Yes, son." He felt a tear roll down his cheek. Forgive me, Jack, he thought.

"Dad?"

"Yes, Jack."

"What do you do? I mean, now that you've grown up?"

"I...I'm a writer, Jack. Novels mostly, and stories."

A pale smile. "I like words."

He reached out, stroked Jack's cheek. "I know. You beat me at Scrabble." He waited for Jack to say something, but he didn't. A moment later he never would.

Carefully, Winter lay down beside Jack, holding his lost childhood tightly to his chest as he cried for the ephemeral boy and his father. He cried for his mother too, but mostly he finally cried for himself.

Later, when the doorbell rang, he went down to answer it with Jack in his arms and tears in his eyes.



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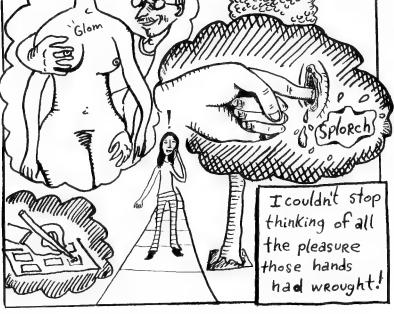
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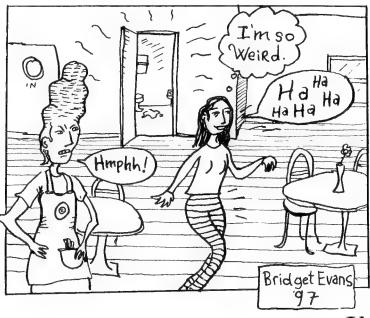


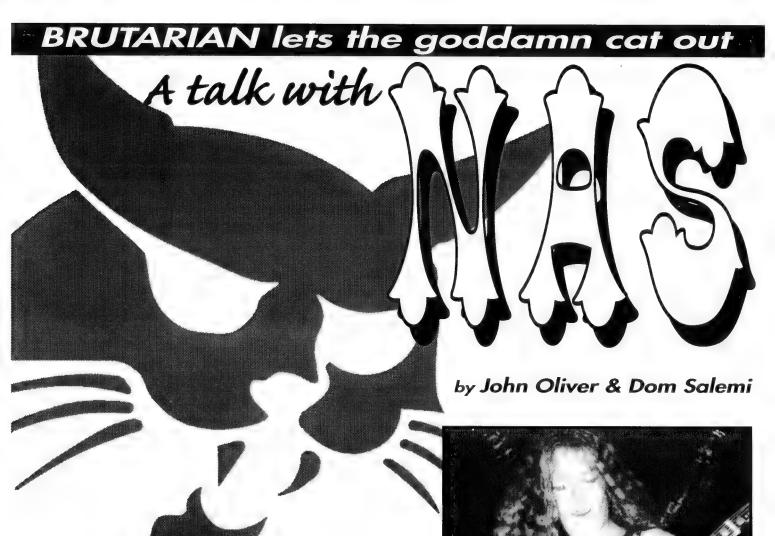












They're the current darlings of the rock underground. The album cover is causing shocked whispers from coast to coast and is so salacious most music stores refuse to display it. They recently graced the cover of the venerable punk mag, Maximum Rock 'N' Roll. They're playing to packed houses at every sleazy venue in the country. Yes, ladies and gentlemen, Nashville Pussy is hot. But we remember one cold, Friday night in January 1997 when our phone rang about eleven o'clock. It was Blaine, former frontman for the hebephrenic, semilegendary cowpunk band Nine Pound Hammer.

"Dom, how are ya, man? Got a new thing goin'. Nashville Pussy. Motorhead with tits. Don't think on it. Get on up here and see us."

Motorhead with tits?... What?... What?.... Lemmy after a sex change

operation? Hells Angels in drag singing glam tunes? And just where in God's name was "here"?

"Here," turned out to be Baltimore. Seventy miles from Casa Brutarian.

"If I left right this instant," I'd hit the door just as they "all was gettin' ready to start up." What "Motorhead with tits" might be would "self-explain itself" once we cast our orbs on the quartet.

Which Nashville Pussy proceeded to do in no uncer-

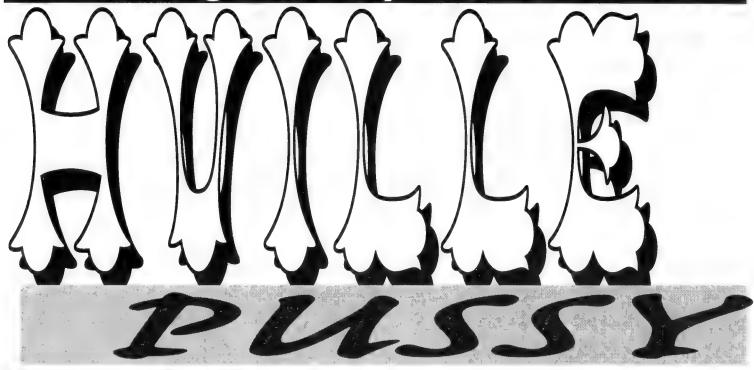
tain terms once we stumbled through the door of a dive calling itself Fletchers an hour and a half after Blaine's summons.

So where do we start? With the tits? Or with the music?

Right! The tits! Okay. Look to your

right. For your edification and delectation: on rhythm guitar, an alluring young blonde clad in black latex jeans and a thin, leopard-skin bikini top. Ah, Ruyter! Breasts so ample and inviting one is forced to acknowledge as Thomas

of the bag, and boy can she drink....





Lodge did almost four centuries ago when writing of an equally pneumatic beauty: Her paps are centres of delight/Her breasts are orbs of heavenly frame.

Now look to the left. There! There! Seventy-five inches of sublimity topped with reddish-purple. Ah, Corey! Our

bass player. Delicious. Delicious. Delicately cut cheekbones and torso so full of sharp curves one is sliced to the marrow even dreaming of looking upon it. Supernal shape. What a piece of work is this woman. In form, how moving! How express and admirable! In action how like a seasoned ecdysiast!

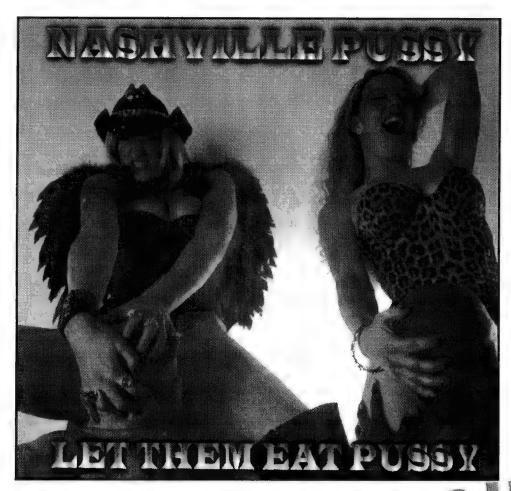
The beauty of the world! The paragon of the uncomprehending and largely inebriated crowd!

Oh yes, Blaine.
Our leader.
Impossible to ignore.
A madman. A bellowing, wailing cynosure. Attacking the guitar like a sailor on twenty-four hour shore leave. No

clock waiting patiently on this man's song. Daring you to look at the alluring flesh on either side

We did. Forgive us, Blaine. Leave us to our dreamy dreams of Corey and Ruyter Corey and Ruyter.

The music. Fast. Furious. And LOUD! The hardest of hard rock culled



from the seventies. From superannuated rock gods: Farner, Jim Dandy, Seeger (before the commercials), Kilminster.

And Blaine screaming

"Motherfucker" and things even more vile, Corey breathing fire. Ruyter coquettishly managing to keep herself from falling out of her costume. Maxx (ex-Cynics drummer now replaced by Jeremy) going boom-alay-boom-alay-boom BOOM!

Forty-minutes of sturm und drang and cliches made new again. And they was hotter than Georgia asphalt. Color ourselves impressed

It's a year later now and because they're hot and because we are blatant opportunists we'd thought we'd have a little chat with Blaine and Ruyter the leaders and founders of this incendiary little combo.

BRUTARIAN: So you junked a perfectly successful band like Nine Pound Hammer to start this circus?

RUYTER: It was a great band. They, the group, just didn't put enough energy into it. Into working the band. Hammer simply didn't tour enough and that, in the end, is simply what you have to do to make it.

BRUTARIAN: But you and your husband Blaine had been playing together even while Hammer were together correct?

RUYTER: I'd do a little bit here and there. Help with a lyric. Get half a credit on a song like *Time Bomb*. And Blaine would ask should I put a guitar solo in here or does this thing worth there. But I really wasn't "playing" with the band.

BRUTARIAN: When did Corey come into the picture?

RUYTER: We were on a really long tour, that is Hammer was on tour, and we met Corey on the beginning of it. This was in Chapel Hill. And we partied with her and she was real cool. I mean how could you not notice her, right? And Blaine and I started talking with her about my starting a new band and he saw we were hitting it off and suggested we exchange numbers. It was going to be an all girl rock and roll band called The Homewreckers. This was a future project. It didn't happen immediately. Shortly after this, Hammer broke up, we headed home and Blaine and I and Adam began to jam and we decided to give Corey a call.

BRUTARIAN: Was she playing bass at this time?

RUYTER: Yes but she was playing real woodsy bass in another combo. We got her to get a pick and showed her a few bluesy licks and some basic stuff. We showed her what to play and there were very few problems. She soaked it all up pretty quickly. She's a very good bass player.

BRUTARIAN: When Blaine first called us he described the group as "Motorhead with tits." Care to elaborate?

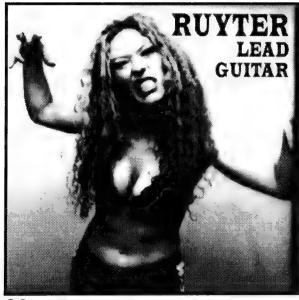
RUYTER: Well, we're hard rockin'

BRUTARIAN: And you've got two good looking girls stage front. Ok, I think I get it.

RUYTER: You're a quick study, I like that

BRUTARIAN: You've got a fondness for bad, well, critically reviled 70s hard rock music.

RUYTER: Yeah, we're fans of Grand Funk and Black Oak Arkansas. Not





everything they've done of course but if you're willing to pick through the albums you can find some real good stuff. Foghat. Go through the lps and find the two or three good cuts on each one. We look for riffs essentially.

BRUTARIAN: Any concerns that
Nashville Pussy might not be taken as
seriously as it should because of the
obvious sex appeal of you and Corey?
RUTTER: Initially, I did have some misgivings but after performing as much as
we have and seeing how the people, the
crowds, have reacted to us as a band,
how they respond to the music, I have to
say I don't really have these worries any
longer. And besides, it's show business,
and whatever helps entertain.

People do come up to me, for instance

after the shows and complement me on my guitar playing as well as Corey's so there is an appreciation for the musicianship. And even if this wasn't the case,

> nobody takes themselves so seriously that we need to hear these things. Hell, after all, we're out there to have fun.



Ok, last serious question.
Nine Pound
Hammer was
critically
acclaimed
and now this
band is starting to get
some good
notices and a

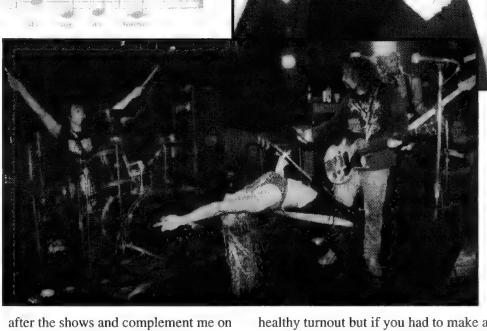
healthy turnout but if you had to make a choice between being critical darlings or making piles of money

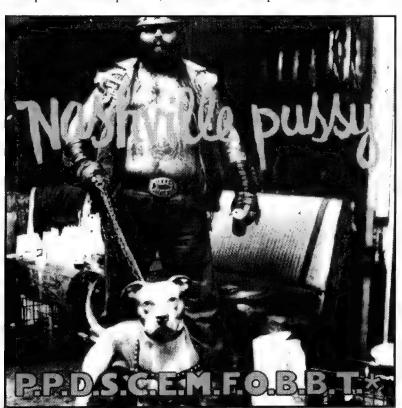
GUITAR

RUYTER: Oh, just show me the money, honey! Piles of money then we'll work overtime for critical acclaim. If you can even call making piles of money a criticism. I mean AC/DC was raking in the cash for years and it took, what, eighteen years before critics started recognizing that they were one of the finest blues-rock bands on the planet.

BRUTARIAN: Are you aware that even progressive record stores are selling your records and cds in opaque plastic bags?

RUYTER: Really? That's pretty fucking stupid. It's a really sexy cover. And its misleading the public. If we had known this was going to happen we would have done something even crazier. I mean, what's the problem with the cover? Corey showing her nipple? The two guys between our legs? We have clothes on. C'mon. Graphic violence is ok, but a little tame sexiness isn't?





BRUTARIAN: Maybe next time you can really shake people up.

RUYTER: Yeah, if AmRep wants to step up to the plate. But we have no complaints. Peter Davis our booking agent steered us to the label and made us feel this was a company we could trust. At least they were listening to us and making a decision on what they'd heard. Unlike a lot of labels that just refused, absolutely refused, to play our tapes or that came to the shows and ignored us.

BRUTARIAN: Getting back to the cover and the theme of censorship how do you feel about the latter? Are there some things people shouldn't see, some kinds of information they should not have access to?

RUYTER: Well, I'd like to think people can police themselves but certainly we're against child pornography and certain graphic displays of violence. And the Internet just has so much disturbing ... I wonder about the effects of a barrage, a collage of graphic violence and extreme pornography on the average mind. Censorship is not something we support but in certain cases



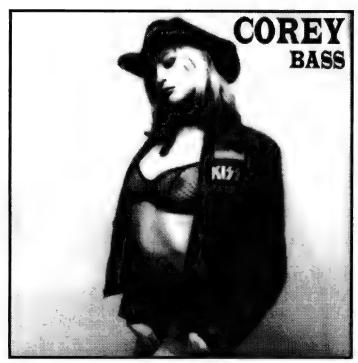


BRUTARIAN: You're headlining now. Is there a difference between that and opening a show?

RUYTER: You get to watch the opening acts. Aside from that, not really.

BRUTARIAN: So is it worth it, worth it after all? All the touring, going hungry, staying in crappy hotels, driving for hours in a beat-up van . . . Is it worth it? Do you ever wish for a simpler life?

RUYTER: Yeah it's worth it!
Absolutely! Every step of the way! Because we're not about art; we're about entertainment.
More importantly, we write the music and the lyrics to keep ourselves entertained and if that translates as it seems to be at this point then we've succeeded.



BRUTARIAN: Alright, time for silly questions, questions culled, we might add, from your many fans in the Baltimore-Washington area. Ready?
RUYTER: Shoot.

BRUTARIAN: Does Blaine's hammer really weigh nine pounds?
RUYTER: Oh yeah, most definitely.
He's all man and a yard wide.

BRUTARIAN: Would you and/or Corey do President Clinton?

RUYTER: Absolutely. He's our leader.

BRUTARIAN: Even if you knew he had only five inches and it was crooked? RUYTER: Not a problem.

BRUTARIAN: Valentine's Day question: What's the most important thing a girl should look for in a man: penis girth, tongue dexterity or his ability to withstand pain?

RUYTER: Dexterity and the ability to withstand pain. These are tough questions. Corey would say length. Maybe. I don't really know.

BRUTARIAN: Is Elvis really dead and if he were alive which Nashville Pussy song would he want to record? **RUYTER:** He's most definitely dead but he's not buried at Graceland. No Blaine

and I and a bunch of friends went to

Graceland on his death date and spent about six hours waiting in line finally passing the grave at about six am and there was absolutely no feeling. There was no "there" there. There was more "Elvis" going on outside the gate than inside the gates. It just did not feel like he was there at all. But if he was alive he would do Going Down.

BRUTARIAN: Okay, manly questions. Blaine what kind of groupies does

Nashville Pussy attract?

BLAINE: Ah, mostly lesbian women. They come after the girls. It's like something I've never seen. The guys are too intimidated to really make a play these days.

BRUTARIAN: But since you and Ruyter are married and are touring you both behave yourselves, don't you?

BLAINE: Well, yeah, since we're together. But if we were separated for a period of time it would be different. But the practical situation is that we're together every night which is good for me. Good for both of us.

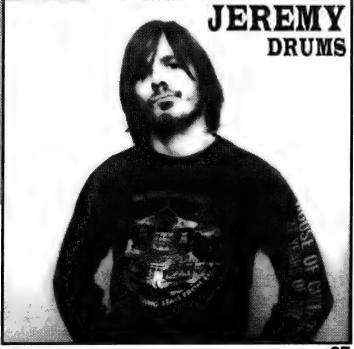
BRUTARIAN: So much togetherness doesn't breed contempt?
BLAINK: No, and interestingly enough, well at least for us, just recently we were able to get away together and realized just how much our love life had been put on hold and how important we are for each other. So, if anything it's helped.

BRUTARIAN: Considering how last band, Nashville Pussy is something of a change. A great change really.

BLAINE: Well, that's because I'm sick of country music. I have some country tapes I made for the road but I was so into country with Nine Pound Hammer so into it for so long I just absorbed it. And I realized one day when Marty Brown came over to my house and played his songs that my songs weren't really country songs they were countrypunk songs. Marty was so good at it and it seemed everyone was now getting into it that I just had to get out of it.

BRUTARIAN: It doesn't seem you're really sick of it just that the wrong people are listening and playing the wrong things.

BLAINE: No, I'm glad so much of the classic country music is being released on box sets and the like. You mentioned in an earlier conversation, the Sundazed Buck Owens project and that's great. I can remember seven or eight years ago it was almost impossible to find Buck and Merle Haggard and I'm glad it's now readily available. Everyone now knows who Bob Willis is, who Lefty Frizzel is. But somewhere along the way what's become popular are these yuppified, lightweight versions of all of this. You've got and dozens dozens of dorky bands playing this shit that is, essentially, country light.



BRUTARIAN: So bands like Wilco, Son Volt...

BLAINE: I hate that stuff. I really don't hear the country in it. I picture it as sounding something like The Flying Burrito Brothers and then I'll have a listen and it sounds like weird modern pop. Moreover, they're not even singing to country people. Travis Tritt is country. Marty Brown is country. Dwight Yoakam is country. They're not meant for "hipsters." Country is not for "hipsters." There's some modern country I like, obviously. Junior Brown is another fine performer and artist. And I like modern country a lot better than what was being put down fifteen years ago.

BRUTARIAN: That Nashville sound. **BLAINE:** Yeah, and you know but it's funny to hear the hipsters talk about how much they like the "old" country. How "old" are we talking about here? You weren't even around fifteen or twenty years ago when country was just horrible. That Nashville sound. Syrupy strings. No beat. No guitar. No twang.

BRUTARIAN: So we didn't hear your comments on the great cover-up.

BLAINE: Well, I agree with Ruyter having talked about it. If we had known the cover was going to cause such a commotion we would have made it more outrageous. But as it is the cover, the inside photos, the graphics, the song titles, the lyrics, all make sense collectively. Makes it all work as a concept.

BRUTARIAN: Which is?

BLAINE: A really cool, modern rock and roll band. That seems very 1997. Very 1998. Very of the moment. And having stickers or what have you over the cover or parts of the cover adds, not detracts from the concept. Hell, if I was a fifteen or sixteen year old kid I'd be intrigued. **BRUTARIAN:** So give us your idea of

more "outrageous" as long as we're beating a dead horse here.

BLAINE: Well, originally we were going to have two black guys between Corey and Ruyter's legs. And we were more concerned, a lot more concerned - had many a discussion actually - about

whether we would be branded racists for doing it that way. And we're not. I, for one, just thought it would be cool to have two big, bald black guys down there. I just think big, black and bald is a cool look. That's it. That's all. So we junked that. For fear of being labeled racists. We had no idea that having the girls pose the way they eventually did with white guys - would cause such a furor. Especially these days when you have magazines like Hustler with come shots on the cover. Penthouse, Screw, they're all doing so much more outrageous things because of what you can see on the Internet. Hell, you have news reports about President Clinton making phone sex calls from the White House and his approval ratings soar. So, believe me, our cover, did not seem the least bit controversial to us. Sexy, maybe, but not really controversial.

BRUTARIAN: Any "bad" seventies hard rock covers for the next disc?

BLAINE: Black Oak's *Hot Rod* which we've been playing in concert and we

like the way it sounds in our hands. And speaking of seventies, though not necessarily bad, Ted Nugent called our house to interview us. Talked to Ruyter. Can you believe that? He was crazy. He was great. Everything was a one liner. Some hits. Some misses. And when he misses., he just jumps to another one. I understood most of what he said but everyone else was looking at me and asking, "What the hell is he talking about?" I especially enjoyed his little sobriety speech.

DISCOGRAPHY

13 69 (45) Snake Eyes/Johnny Hot Rod/Texas Border

(Black Lung Records 1996)
P.P.D.S.C.E.M.F.O.B.B.T (45) First I
Look At The Purse/Eat My Dust

(Reservation Records 1997)

Nashville Pussy (45) Go Motherfucker

Go/Milk Cow Blues

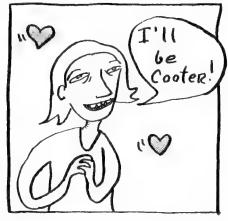
(Get Hip Recordings 1997) Let Them Eat Pussy (Full Length)



"Well, aren't YOU the lucky one!!!"

Those Duke Boys











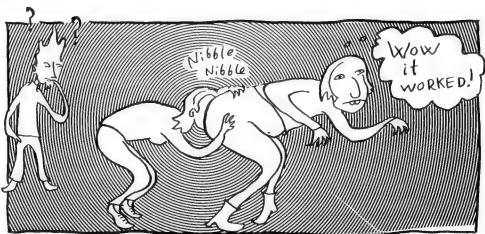












COLDCONNECTION

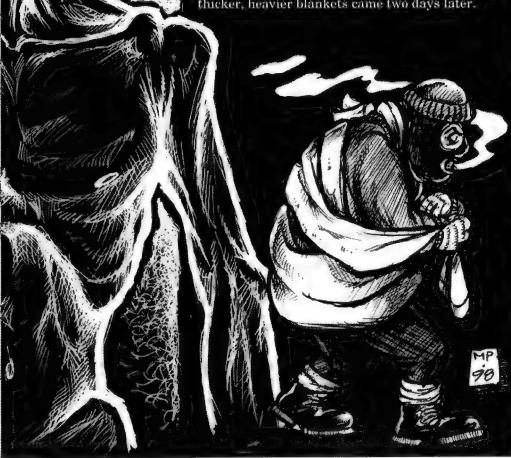


IT was more than 110 degrees in Frank's apartment, so hot that he almost couldn't feel the effect of the small space heaters at his feet. With the water running, the bathroom's humidity made it the most comfortable room in the place, but it left much to be desired in the way of entertainment. Only boredom rivaled discomfort in Frank's mind.

In the space of just over a month, Frank's world had shrunk to one small room, a half-dozen layers of clothing, and an endless search for warmth.

When the cold first came upon Frank, it had been nothing but a nuisance, a slight chill and occasional shiver. He'd gone to work and night-clubs as he always did, discounting the possibility that something could be wrong with his finely tuned and meticulously cared for body.

On the fourth day of the increasing chill, Frank bought himself flannel pajamas and slept in nightclothes for the first time in his adult life. The first in what was to become a long series of thicker, heavier blankets came two days later.



Frank's coworkers at Bodyworks were whispering behind his back by that time, commenting on his new habit of wearing an extra set of sweats over his usual exercise instructor attire. His personal workouts, growing in length and frequency for the body heat they generated, had also not gone unnoticed.

Frank explained everything calmly and naturally to those who questioned his behavior. He spoke of the weather, of increasing focus on body image, and of the metabolic changes which were overtaking him as his thirtieth year approached. Although those who listened did not find Frank's words convincing, they were more than enough for Frank himself.

It took a stranger to convince Frank that something was seriously wrong with him.

Frank met Cassie (Carrie? Clair?) at Caravan, a nightspot in Hollywood characterized by expensive drinks, blaring live music, and frantic sexual energy. She'd been the best looking thing in the place, a long-haired Asian beauty sitting alone at one of the dartboard-sized tables. Frank took the initiative and slid into the chair across from her.

Frank and the girl had talked for almost an hour, grinning at infantile jokes and sharing lies about their histories and expectations. They progressed from there in accordance with a script that Frank found comforting in its familiarity.

Back at his apartment, Frank pointed his conquest to the liquor cabinet and excused himself to the bathroom. Feeling self-conscious about his unseasonable wool socks and long underwear, Frank stripped to his deep blue speedos. He hoped to get Cassie into bed quickly, before his goosebumped skin started to shiver in the cold drafts of his apartment.

When Frank opened the bathroom door, Cassie was sitting on the couch; she put a glass of amber liquid on the coffee table and stood at the sight of him. Her eyes locked on his, Cassie reached behind her back and unzipped her black mini dress as Frank stepped from cold tile to more comfortable carpeting.

The warmth of desire banished some of Frank's chills when Cassie's athletic body was revealed — her fistsized breasts held firm by a translucent black sports bra, the carefully trimmed hair between her legs peeking past the edges of her g-string.

Teasing, Cassie didn't let Frank lay a hand on her as they hurried to the bedroom. Frank got beneath the covers quickly, telling himself that he was hurried by desire and nothing more.

They left the lights off. Cassie slipped quickly into the bed and Frank reached out to caress the curve of her waist and thigh. She shuddered at his touch. Fumbling with what remained of each other's clothes, they answered the questions which society and modern times demanded be asked, divulging secrets of history, protection, and health in breathy tones as their bodies became familiar.

The formality of foreplay disposed of, Frank rolled Cassie onto her back and positioned himself above her. With a steady hand, he spread her wetness and guided himself in. In the faint light from outside the window, he saw her eyes open wide in surprise.

"Frank," she whispered, but he silenced her with his lips and went to work. Almost immediately she began to struggle.

Frank raised himself up, putting his hands under her back and gripping her shoulders to keep her in place. "Jesus, Frank, it's too cold," she said, louder, but her permission had already been given and nothing short of a stroke could stop Frank in mid act.

Cassie arched and pushed with her legs trying to pull away, but Frank had strength and desire on his side. She slapped at his flanks, and, somehow, that excited Frank more than he might have expected. Cassie shivered and cried out when Frank came, and he found the sound gratifying, despite its motivation.

"You pig!" Cassie yelled, pushing herself away as Frank, spent, rolled onto his side. She sat up and spread her legs, digging into her thatch with the edge of a sheet as if trying to scrub every trace of Frank from her.

Watching the scene, Frank let out a short, depreciating laugh. "What's the problem? I thought you said you were on the pill," he said.

"I can feel it in there," she said, her voice rising in the onset of panic. "It's horrible, like ice. I can't get it out."

Frank just shook his head.

"What's wrong with you? Aren't you going to do something?" Cassie cried, half yelling.

"Want me to get your purse?" asked Frank, his use for Cassie gone with his semen.

After that, Frank could get no more than a string of "Fuck You"s and sobs from Cassie as she threw on her things and fled his apartment.

Frank had written Cassie off long before she slammed his front door, but he couldn't as easily discount the way she'd acted. He'd had girls become upset because of his speed or angered by his forcefulness before, but this was a definite first. If Cassie had been complaining about anything but cold, Frank might have just filed her under "bananas" and been done with it, but he didn't know what to make of things as they stood.

Frank slept fitfully that night, and his few dreams were filled with frost and blankets of white.

The next day, Frank lost his job. He was spotting for a regular when fingers unable to function perfectly because of the cold betrayed him. Had he lost his grip with both hands, 135 pounds of steel and iron would have crushed the member's windpipe or broken his neck. As it was, Frank was able to push the falling weights to the side of the bench before they could do any real harm, but enough damage had already been done. Rightfully frightened, the member drew the attention of a supervisor with his yelling. Frank's employment was terminated almost immediately.

From there, things got only worse. A regimen of teas recommended by his herbalist to treat the condition proved to be both worthless and expensive. His health insurance gone with his employment, the possibility of Frank being able to afford another doctor was remote at best. He would have to deal with his worsening condition on his own.

In a short time, Frank found that he couldn't easily eat any food which wasn't hot. Milk, yogurt, raw eggs, and other staples of his strict diet were soon completely inedible. He tried to make up for the lack with black beans and stir-fried tofu, but they were not to his taste.

As the cold progressed, Frank's urination became increasingly painful,



and careful investigation revealed small chips of ice in his piss. But by that time even pain was a welcome distraction from the unending cold.

Standing in the bathroom with only self pity and despair for company, Frank did slow, deep knee bends and other simple exercises to warm his body and maintain what tone he could in stiffening muscles. The last time Frank had dared strip and weigh himself, he was almost fifty pounds less than optimum. He was shocked that he could have lost so much weight so quickly, more than a pound a day. Even worse had been Frank's reflection — a pale, thin camp survivor shaking in place where a bronzed superman had once stood.

Pain and gain were no longer on Frank's mind, and when his legs began to tire he eased himself down to sit on the closed lid of the commode. Hunger gnawed at him as it now always did, and Frank raised the lower edge of his ski masks to expose his mouth. With a large spoon, Frank sipped a few mouthfuls of the broth kept at a constant boil on a hot plate on the counter beside him. The broth represented the last of his edible food, and its low level in the pot spoke to Frank of an uncomfortable truth: he was going to have to venture outside.

Putting off the inevitable, Frank decided to wait for the sun to be high in the sky before beginning his journey.

At a quarter to noon by the bathroom clock, Frank could procrastinate no longer. He stood and shambled to the door. Bowlegged by layers of cloth and padding, Frank knew that he looked the fool. The irony of his inability to lower his arms as if they were muscle-bound was not lost on him.

It took more than a minute for Frank to open the door with his thick, clumsy fingers. He dared not touch the knob with his bare hand for fear that his flesh would stick to metal like a tongue to a frozen pole.

Cold air struck Frank like a wall as it rushed into the bathroom. His willpower stretched near its limit by the necessity of having to leave his tropical haven, Frank could feel the ache of near-frozen tears trying to work their way from the corners of his eyes.

The dark form of an ash-filled hibachi — one of his many failed experiments with warmth — stood in Frank's way as he made his way to the window. A dual thermometer hung beside the curtains, its silver columns showing 96 degrees within the apart-

ment and a beautiful August 82 outside. Too tired to rip the bearer of bad news from the wall, Frank covered the truth with his hand. He clenched his eyes shut as frustration turned to dry, choking sobs.

Every minute brought the sun lower in the sky and leeched some of the warmth of the world — Frank had no time for unproductive self pity. He pulled himself together as best he could and steeled his nerves for the ordeal.

With the slow, automatic movement of a man on his way to the gallows, Frank scooped what money he had left into the pocket of his dirty, moisturematted fur coat and headed out the front door.

Disassociation gave Frank the ability to deal with his discomfort; he watched his trip to the market as if from a distance. The sensation put him in mind of stories he'd read about people touching the raw edges of death during surgery, leaving their too too solid flesh behind and looking down on their still bodies from above.

The scorn and harsh words of people Frank passed were easy to discount in his detached state, although the shadow of a man he had once been in several scowling faces wrenched painfully at the emptiness in his gut. Only his small pleasure at the puzzled looks of those who noticed the steam of his breath kept his sanity in a sort of balance.

The small market which Frank frequented made up for its high Westwood rent in part by hiring the most desperate undergraduates from nearby UCLA and paying them starvation wages. It was not too long ago that Frank had taken great pleasure in teasing the college boys and bragging to them about his perfect health and physique or flirting with their girlfriends. There was little chance of Frank being recognized, bundled up as he was, but being at a disadvantage in the presence of someone who might bear him a grudge made Frank feel intensely uncomfortable.

That Frank never had to face his discomfort, and that the ice in his veins would not be with him for much longer, could not be said to be a blessing in light of what would take their place.

The change in Frank's plans came

when he caught sight of a figure across the street and not more than half a block past the market walking in his direction. The figure was as bundled up as Frank. This in and of itself was not enough to draw his attention — Westwood had more than its share of psychos and eccentrics — but as the figure got closer, Frank could swear that he saw the steam of ice-cold breath float up from its ski mask.

For a moment, Frank was unsure how to process what he was seeing. He stopped and stood his ground, turning slowly to watch the figure as it passed, a canvas bag of groceries over its shoulder. The tell-tale thickness of multiple ski masks, heavy rubber boots peaking out from the lower edges of a trench coat that covered gorilla-like bulk, and a muscle-bound gait identical to Frank's own — it was too much to be a coincidence.

Finding renewed energy in something that felt like hope, Frank wrenched himself into motion. If he could catch his doppleganger, perhaps he could learn the common source of their troubles.

The chase, if it could be called that, was a short one. Frank kept pace with his target only with difficulty, and felt great relief when the trail led into an art-deco apartment building within spitting distance of both fraternity row and the veterans' cemetery.

When Frank reached the building's front door — thankfully not guarded by a security system — the other was still fumbling with the lock of a bottom-floor apartment not two doors from the building's entry. At the sound of the front door closing, the other looked up and their eyes met for the first time.

Through holes in the other's masks, Frank could see a pair of swimmer's goggles — thinking of his own dry, stinging eyes, Frank wished he had thought of that — and behind the lenses a pair of steel gray eyes. A woman's eyes.

The woman fought open the door of her apartment and rushed inside as Frank closed the distance between them. He arrived just in time to check the closing of her door with an outthrust arm. The woman put up only feeble resistance; by leaning forward, Frank forced himself into the apartment.

For a moment, Frank thought he had died and gone to heaven. Along the window of the apartment was a row of six propane heaters covered by home-made hoods that carried their fumes through the layer of insulating blankets which covered the windows to dump their toxic fumes into the outside air. The amount of heat generated by the heaters was incredible — the room had to be 125 degrees if it were ten.

On the couch was a cocoon formed from three electric blankets sewn one within the other, perfect for warding off the nightly drop in temperature. Seeing how his counterpart was dealing with her condition, Frank felt flickers of envy and respect, emotions which he was unaccustomed to associating with women.

Frank had been so taken in by the woman's accomplishments that he had almost forgotten that she was there. The woman was standing just to the side of the door, her purchases on the floor at her feet. Frank jumped when she finally spoke.

"You're letting the heat out," she said, her voice putting her age in the late twenties by Frank's estimation. "Either come in or get out."

Frank chose the former option and closed the door behind him, taking note of the soft whiff of weather-stripping dragging across carpet.

"I can't say I'm pleased to meet you," said the woman, reaching to flick on the room's lights. She paused for a moment, but if she expected some kind of response Frank was not going to satisfy her.

"I know that you haven't recognized me," she continued. "How could you." She raised her hands to her neck and took hold of the edges of her ski masks. "Maybe this will refresh your memory."

The woman pulled off the masks with a slow, deliberate upward motion, taking the swimming goggles with them. Her hair was hidden beneath the cowl of a wetsuit, and the face within the cowl's oval frame was, in Frank's opinion, plain at best. Her nose was a bit too big, her lips thin, her eyebrows uneven. The pale, almost blue, tinge of her skin could be attributed to the cold, but Frank could not imagine that she'd look much better at the best of times, even with a

generous coat of makeup.

She stared at Frank for a long moment. "Do you remember?" she said. "Now do you understand why I've had to do this to you?"

"Lady, I've never seen you before in my life," Frank said. He was so con-



cerned with giving his flip answer that he didn't register the meaning of her second question for several moments. When she scowled, almost frightening him with the intensity of her disgust, something clicked in Frank's head. "You did this?" he asked, doubting.

The woman moved toward the windows and held her hands out over one of the heaters. She turned to glare at Frank when he took a step forward. "Just before Thanksgiving, there was a party at the Kappa house. You were there."

Frank nodded, remembering. The party had been a blast, put on by a number of his friends in the fraternity, complete with kegs and an air of sexual energy that bordered on an orgy.

After giving him a moment, the woman continued. "At some point you went upstairs and wandered into one of the bedrooms. You found a young woman who'd had too much to drink lying on one of the beds, passed out. You couldn't resist taking advantage of the situation."

Although it hadn't happened quite as the woman described, Frank knew what she was talking about. He'd been making time with a hot young teacher's aid from the geology department and had convinced her to come upstairs with him. Only one of the rooms was not in use, and Frank and the girl went inside to satisfy their desires. The T.A. had balked at the sight of a girl sleeping on one of the room's twin beds even though, Frank argued, what the sleeping girl didn't know wouldn't hurt her. That had started an argument that ended with Frank's chance at an easy piece walking out the door in disgust.

Wanting to make the most of a bad situation, Frank locked the door behind her and made use of what was at hand. He remembered a short skirt, white stockings, and cotton panties. He also remembered finding a jar of Vaseline in the bathroom medicine cabinet. Most of all, he remembered how the unconscious woman had shaked like a rag doll as he put it to her, and how much it had turned him on. What he didn't remember was what the woman looked like.

"Whatever happened to you, it wasn't me," Frank said, hoping he sounded convincing.

"I know it was," she said, and crossed to a doorway covered by a cur-

> tain of blankets which Frank assumed led to the kitchen. Frank followed as she passed through.

The girl had been unconscious the whole time,
Frank was sure of it.
There was no way she could have known it was him. Still, she had somehow infected him with cold in a misguided attempt at revenge. And no matter how smart she seemed to be, she had somehow messed herself up in the process.

If Frank had felt more himself, his impulse would have been to attack. The woman admitted doing something to him, although for the life of him he couldn't figure out what it was, and that meant he would be defending himself and nothing more. If he hurt her enough, she'd tell him what he needed to do to reverse what she had

done. But at the moment, Frank was still weak from his walk, and even after resting he didn't know if he'd have the energy to make a show of strength possible. His only hope was that she would make things clear enough for him to come up with a course of action.

The first thing Frank saw when he entered the kitchen was a small dining area dominated by a plain card table. On the table was what appeared to be a pressure cooker connected to a pair of canisters by thin black rubber hoses. The canisters reminded Frank of miniature versions of the tanks uses to hold helium or oxygen under pressure. Surrounding the works was a circle of some kind of red dirt and seven black candles standing in wide pools of melted wax as if they were only the most recent of a long series.

Circling to the far side of the table, the woman gestured to the strange contraption. "That is the heart of your suffering," she said.

Frank stared in disbelief. Whatever it was he had been expecting, this was not it.

"When I woke up that night, I could feel what you had done. I hated you for it, even though I had no idea who you were." She was close to tears now, her voice cracking, her fingers clenching into fists. "I felt humiliated, asking around, trying to find out who had raped me while I slept. Nobody knew, or, at least, nobody talked."

She swallowed hard and leaned against the counter as if her legs were no longer up to the task of letting her stand. "I was always so uptight, so righteous. I'd never even gotten drunk before. Then you changed everything, took everything away."

The woman began to look far away, almost dazed. Frank got the distinct impression that more than the woman's temperature was out of whack.

"One of my friends was into a lot of metaphysical stuff. She suggested that I go to this occult shop in Hollywood, get them to do tarot cards or something to point me toward you. I'd never done anything like that, didn't really think it would work. But the woman at the shop, she did more than tell me comforting words and take my money — she showed me how to find you and punish you all at the



same time."

"This is bull shit," Frank broke in. "What are you trying to say? That you put a curse on me?"

"It's voodoo," she said, her eyes wandering to the contraption.
"I've traded the sanctity of my soul for revenge. At least I'll have the comfort of dragging you to hell along with me."

It was all an act or the imaginings of a deluded mind, Frank was sure of it. The woman felt guilty for what she'd let happen to her and decided to take it out on him. She'd drugged him somehow, and was putting on this show for his benefit, to get him to confess. Or something.

Well, it wasn't going to work. Frank was too smart, knew too much. Even if there was such a thing as voodoo — and Frank knew that there wasn't — it didn't work if you didn't have something personal from your victim, and the girl didn't have squat of his.

Meaning to show the lie of her words, Frank reached for the pressure cooker.

"No!" the girl cried, reaching out to stop Frank.

Even though they were both in a sorry state, Frank was still the stronger of the two and he fended her off with ease. A straight-arm push sent her back into the wall with a satisfying thud, and she slipped to the floor in a stupor.

That gave Frank more than enough time to do what he wanted to do.

Even with gloved hands, the pressure cooker's long handles made it easy enough for him to separate the lid. When he pulled it away, all he could see was a thick soup of fog that rose up to spill over the edge of the pot.

The fog was cold, biting cold. "What is this shit?" Frank asked.

The woman was struggling to get to her feet and said nothing. Frank took a closer look at the canisters and saw for the first time that they were labeled — the pressure cooker was filled with liquid nitrogen.

Frank knew that the stuff could be used to freeze things. He remembered a demonstration in high school where the teacher had dipped a raw egg into liquid nitrogen for only a few seconds and then thrown it at the wall. The egg had shattered like glass.

It fit with her voodoo story, although Frank still thought it was a front. If she dropped a voodoo doll of him in there, it would certainly make him feel cold. Not that Frank believed it for a second.

The only way to know for sure what she was up to was to see what was at the bottom of the pot. Frank wasn't about to reach into the stuff, so his only option was to dump it out. Taking hold of the handle with both hands, Frank lifted the pressure cooker.

The woman had stopped struggling. If Frank had turned to look at her, he would have noticed blood seeping around the edge of her cowl, and a strange, far away look in her unequally dilated pupils. In its weakened state, her body had not been up to withstanding Frank's attack, feeble as it had been. Her already strained mind was losing cohesion; her lips began to move, forming silent syllables.

Frank's intention had been to dump the pot out right there on the table, but the thought of liquid nitrogen spilling onto the floor and across his feet caused him to revise his thinking. Instead, he turned and shuffled carefully toward the sink.

Despite Frank's best efforts, the nitrogen began to slosh about in its container. Through the rolling mist, Frank caught sight of something pink, something small. It was a fist, a tiny fist. "Jesus!" Frank yelled, and the handle of the pot slipped from his fingers.

In his last moments, Frank heard the woman behind him sobbing. "I never even named it," she said. It would be her epitaph.

On its way to the floor the pot turned to spill its contents. Frank caught no more than a glimpse of the rune-covered child — as much the woman's flesh as it was his own — before it struck the hard kitchen tile and shattered like a ceramic doll.



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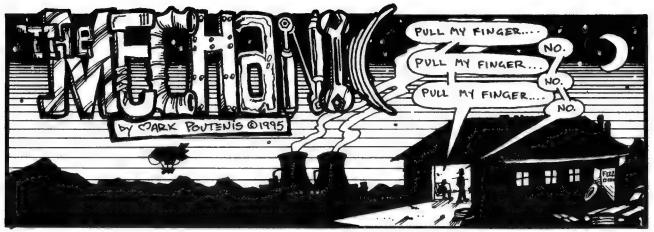
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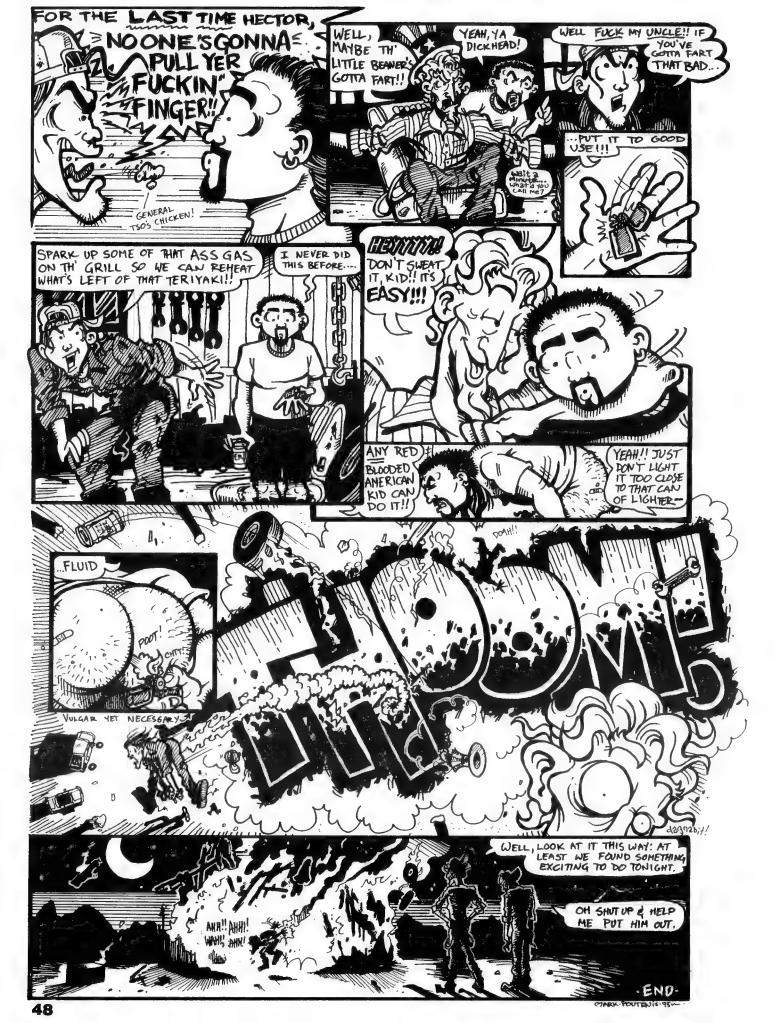
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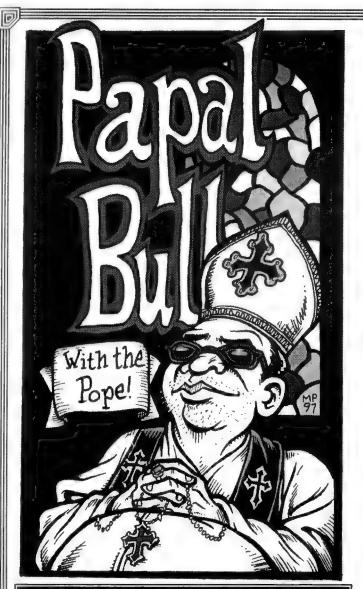
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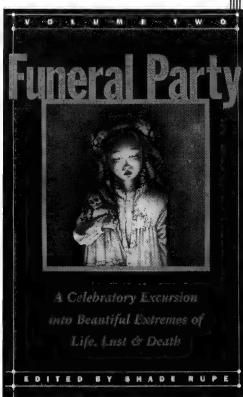
His Holiness reviews all things pious in the counter-culture world

Buon giorno, my wayward children. He writes to you from Cuba where He is quite exhausted after having had several audiences with the atrociously dressed apostate Communist Fidel Castro. The good news is that the Fidelismo took confession and freely confessed his sins. Which were numerous. The bad news is that he would not let any of his baseball players sign with the Nuevo York Yankees who, with David Cone yet recuperating from shoulder surgery, are in dire need of pitching. Yet we need not yet despair, as your Pontiff has promised to do his best to arrange an introduction with Debra Lewinsky in exchange for rights to Oswald Hernandez, a lefty who, Vatican scouts tell Him, brings it close to ninety-seven miles an hour. Plus possesses, how you say, a wicked slider. Which is much needed now that the

Protestant Steinbrenner has weakened the offense with his inability to trade for Chuck Knobloch. Perhaps the threat of immediate excommunication will convince the Polish-Catholic second sacker to report to Joe Torre & Co. come spring. Your spiritual leader nevertheless asks you to pray for the Pinstripers in this, their hour of need...

Turning to more sinful matters, from the modern Sodom also known as Nuevo York comes the bellisma and glossy FUNERAL PARTY a high tech mag-

azine exploring and "celebrating" the "extremes of life. lust and death." Essays, stories, art and reviews staking out the territory where the morbid meets the erotic. where sex and death intertwine, where the absurd courts the vulgar. There is more here than even the disturbed Hieronymus Bosch dared to dream. My flock. this is recommended only for those who do not suffer from agida.



(\$19.95 plus postage from Rude Shape Productions, 511 6th Ave., No. 325, NY, NY 10011)

My amanuensis, Rudolpho, has asked The Pope to hip you to SEX, AMERICAN STYLE a study of "sexual mania in the late '60s through the '70s." Although it must be urged that all refrain from perusing this sinful tome, even He must admit it is a wonderful read, stuffed with highly arousing picturas of, and discursos on films, topless dancers and erotic detritus of all sorts. None of it having anything to do with inter Christianos non nominandum, that which must not be named among Christians - the crime of which good woman can know nothing. (\$16.95 from Feral House, 2532 Lincoln Blvd., Suite 359, Venice, CA 90291)

And here is why we still long for and now must buy THE PLAYMATE BOOK - FIVE DECADES OF CENTERFOLDS: for the impossibly beautiful women who suggest a longing to indulge in depravi-

ties so monstrous that, once accomplished they would become irresistible; or if we can allow ourselves to step outside ourselves, creatures soaring heavenwards in an immaculate dream in which the adoration of the soul would float about themselves in a love for ever unconfessed, for ever pure. This is what the Pope must tell Himself; you, you are allowed to provide yourself with whatever excuses you must make for plopping this exquisto exercise in erotica on your coffee table. (General Publishing Group available at better bookstores)

What excuse though for TRUE BLOOD, apostalic photo-journalist Charles Gatewood's descent into the demimonde of bloodplay and bloodsports? Women fetishistically adorned, men wearing the headresses of our red brothers, couples acting out vampire fantasies; all, seemingly, bathed in blood. With pseudo-poetic text from impoverished pornographers that you will not notice thank the Christ. Too much solitude has acted on the brains of these vile creatures, first exciting and stimulating them, then

inducing a languor haunted by depraved reveries leading to a host of sado-masochistic dreams to which the male priapic and passive abandons himself to the piscine smell of the female. Andrea Del Sarto! This is so shocking to Him He is seriously thinking of reinstituting the Inquisition so as to stamp out these loathsome Satanic practices. (Last Gasp Publishing, 777 Florida St., San Francisco, CA 94110)

From the venerable Catholic country of Spain comes the spring singles for MUNSTER **RECORDS**, one of the noblest purveyors of obscure pop, punk and garagista on the planet. First we have the low-fi sounds of some young femminiles who dress like nurses with ripped fishnets calling themselves *The Pussycats*. They have asked a young alcoholic calling himself Lagarto to help them with due Black Flag songs. It is very good. Secondo, we have due pouty slatterns from LA joined by a masked wrestler for

the shrill, sleazy punk. They call themselves Hot Damn! and He must admit, that although there is little doubt that they are on the path to damnation with this music, it is very hot. The last in the trio of releases is an obscurito single from the soon-to-be-cannonized, drunken pop-God Alex Chilton. There is The Seed's tune Can't Seem To Make You Mine and a deranged originale e nome Bangkok. It is beyond good (Five dollars for each and a catalog to PO Box 18107, Madrid 28080, Spain or munster@munster-

records.com)

From the environs where political leaders deem it acceptable to call young girls who are strange to them to talk dirty is the mail order concern TRASH PALACE. Truly there is much trash for sale here: picturas of strippers and whores pretending to be actresses and stills and lobby cards and posters from the movies which He Himself has forbidden His followers from watching. Plus the movies themselves.



Fra Lippo Lippi! The Two Spies With Female Flowered Panties, Wham Bam Thank You Spaceman, Isle Of Perversions, Lesbo A Go-Go. There is no end to this filth. Rest assured, my bambinos, He has placed a call to the proprirabbi. Moses etor's Splatterstein and asked him to do what he can to stop this youthful degenerate's spread of such vileness (\$4.00 for catalog to Brian D. Horrowitz, Box 2565, Silver Spring, MD 20915 or trashpal@erols.com)

But of course should you feel the need to read reviews of forbidden cinema there is **ECCO**. Your Pope can only decry such

eleganza scrituro wasted on works which are best ignored. This issue concentrates on Hate Films, the oeuvre of blaxploitation pioneer Rudy Ray Moore and Mondo Movies. With many rare stills and press book ads this is the definitivo e molte bella guide to that produced by the diseased and the deranged (\$6.00 to Kill-Gore Productions, Box 65742, Washington, DC 20035)

There are many fine, lucente, literate U.K. magazines covering pop culture - Empire, Mojo, Q, Bizarre - but the best of them all is UNCUT because they have the migliore taste. They are so bela they are almost able to convince His Holiness that the listless Performance is the greatest British movie ever made (although He'd sooner watch Scream and Scream Again a half-dozen times before watching sodomite Mick Jagger and company bore Him half to

death with their uninspired couplings). Ignore this misguided disquisition and dip into the lengthy review section and discover molte meravigliosamente books and records and films and videos you may have missed on initial release (\$7.50 at better book and magazine shops)



ncreal

Pulp Culture

A 200 Page HISTORY Catalog

Also from the land where men enjoy having their behinds reddened with birches is the box set from the inventors of the doom-boom sound, Joy Division. While many Catholics were doing their burn-in-hell dance when they found that gloomy-Gus founder Ian Curtis had hung himself, your Pope must confess that HEART AND SOUL, a four-CD set compiled from their official releases and fleshed out with unreleased studio and live cuts, is essenziale. Few performers toiling in the dubious field of rock were better able to convey the torture of the artist compelled to make simplistic music for semi-literates and love to women who, because

they were women, could not possibly understand (London Imports)

Finally, we have BUD PLANT'S INCREDIBLE CAT-ALOG a compendium of all that is raffinato in the world of comics, comic art, cheesecake, pulp and fantasy illustration. You want the complete collection of Crumb? A fully illustrated biography of Gustave Dore? Bettie Page trading cards? Frank Frazetta prints? It's all here and more. More of what it is difficolta to say but not if you are one who

is believes in an aesthetics of populy this is, as you say, a must (\$3.00)

PUBLICATION

SPRING NUMBER 1998

believes in an aesthetics of popular culture. For you this is, as you say, a must (\$3.00 to Bud Plant Comic Art, Box 1689, Grass Valley, CA 95945-1689 or cs@budplant.com). . . Until next time, my children, be nice to one another yet not so nice that you get excited and touch the private parts



THE DAVID ARNOLD JAMES BOND PROJECT

Shaken and Stirred

When one thinks of James Bond movies, one thinks of gorgeous women, slick cars, fab gadgets and fiendish villains, in that order. One does not, however, think of great songs. Apart from Shirley Bassey's "Goldfinger," the themes from James Bond movies haven't been much. ranging from unmemorable bombast to godawful dreck. That notwithstanding, David Arnold has assembled a compilation of overblown versions of Bond film themes (not including "Goldfinger") performed by a cast ranging from technoheads Leftfield to punk pioneer lggy Pop. The various covers are of fleeting interest as novelties or background music, but, given that the songs aren't much, they don't stand up on their own. Further, rather than strip down the arrangements to showcase the songs, Nicholas Dodd's bloated orchestral charts smother all they touch, ruining some potentially interesting performances. There's some kitsch value here, but not much else. The sales pitch on this one was probably more interesting than the finished product. (Sire) df

EL BAD Trick or Treat

Vocalist Reece's growl makes El Bad the most Flag-like of Greg Ginn's post-Black Flag projects. It's more structured than his instro bands, but once again, Ginn's frenzied guitar riffing steamrolls both vocals and rhythm section. Like Lou Reed, Ginn-the-producer's insistence on drowning out his bandmates wastes their abilities and eliminates any true musical tension. That may, however, be a blessing. Reece wants to scare, but he's essentially a James Hetfield wannabe. The psycho/sci-fi "Shrink/Alien Invasion" is silly, and one of the other tracks stand out. For all his considerable output, Ginn risks becoming a guitarist without a context because of his production tendency to crush his companions. (SST) df

DOCK BOGGS

Country Blues: Complete Early Recordings (1927-29)

John Fahey's Revenant label continues to mine the underbelly of American music and this release obviously has special importance to the folks at Fahey's company as it's been given the deluxe packaging treatment. The disc comes in a slightly larger than Cd-size hard-

back 63 page book. Boggs was a singer/banjo player who roamed the wilds of Eastern Kentucky/Western Virginia making his own brand of music. I would say that Boggs is the Robert Johnson, white division winner in the tormented-soul category. Like they say, he sounds as if all his bones were breaking through his skin every time he opened his mouth to sing. One of ten children, Boggs started working the coal mines when he was 12 years old. He was a roving performer playing on street corners throughout the area until the early 1930's. Then he seemed to vanish only to be rediscovered in the early '60's. along with Skip James by Fahey. What Fahey found was a true American original who transcended the folk genre. In other words, Boggs' stuff was, and is, timeless. Kudos to all concerned for bringing this music back into the light. (Revenant) js

BURN IT DOWN

Burn it Down is consumed by its collective righteous angst about what a cruel and miserable place this ever-changing world in which we live is. Or maybe its members just need to get laid. Its four-song EP is all big guitars

and tuneless, screaming rage, with not much to distinguish it from a gazillion crunch metal bands working today. At least it had the good sense not to stretch this noise into a full-length CD. (Revolution 6) df

CAST IRON HIKE Watch It Burn

Such a gentle man, Dennis Brennan. A troubadour weaned on sixties rock radio singing gorgeously melodic songs about love gone bad, romantic delusion and blue collar angst. Even the cynical turns are suffused with poetic melancholy. So what fresh hell is this, that firstborn son Jacob Otis (with the help of his very able mates) proffers for our edification and amusement? What buzzing guitars? What pulverizing riffs? What tortured screamsing? "Feeling okay is a feeling that I just can't recall/And when I feel alright, I know that it's wrong."

Ah, yes: the never ending cycle of pain caused by exquisitely sensitive souls on an intimate footing with the seeds of iniquity lying in every man's heart, with the cravings for filthy pleasures with which even the most puritanical must wrestle, with the criminal desires feeding off the imaginations of those



dedicated to artifice. With such knowledge what can young artifactors like Cast Iron Hike offer as anodyne? As corrective? As purgative? Watch It Burn: loud, brutal, lapidary metal-thrashcore. That rocks like a mother-fucker. For this we give thanks. And turn the volume control clockwise until we can turn it no more. (Victory Records, Box 146546, Chicago, IL 60614) ds

COURSE OF EMPIRE Telepathic Last Words

The Lone Star state's biggest exponent of industrial noise and experimental melodic thrash asks us somewhere here if you light yourself on fire whether the world will pay to watch you burn. Burning burning burning.

Course of Empire would pluck us out burning. With their tongues planted firmly in chique. Knowing the general lot is indifferent and desires only the hammer and tong, tools coercing acceptance of the latest and most audacious audacity. A la Marilyn Manson. Which Telepathic Last Words, despite the tribal drumming set by dual percussion, chiming buzzing guitars, techno pyrotechnics, and cri-de-coeur nasal vocalisms, is definitely not. Because these, bearing the Yellow Rose, understand we are not those peoples.

Rather, peoples no longer striving to strive toward such things.

We wander.

People without a heart or a home.

Asking: who are these who seem to walk beside us? Who tease us into near understanding? Then hurl laughter at us which sounds like something

other than laugher? (TVT, 23 East 4th St., NY, NY 10003) ds

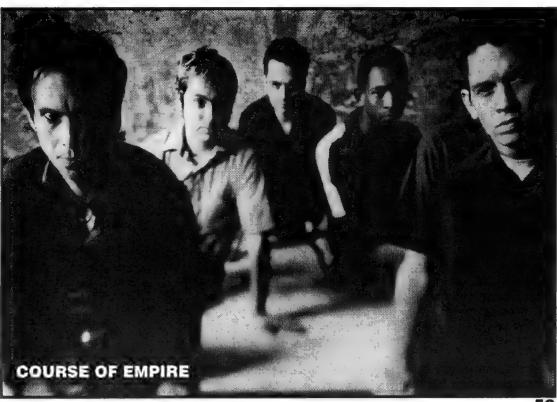
THE DIRTYS
You Should Be Sinnin'

We have been told by the lunatics at Crypt that these boys hate everybody. Even themselves. Certainly their audience as this "music" is little more than wretched, drunken excess.

Recorded at the lowest of low-fi. With screams of pure fury masquerading as vocals. With out of tune guitars playing at warp speed. With bass and drums hitting everything but the beat. Set to lyrics about drinking and sniffing cocaine and playing with long-legged womens. In other words, pure undistillated rock and roll, Daddy-O. And we like it. Even if we know it's not really good for us. (Crypt) ds

FRONT 242 Mut@ge.Mix@ge

So your impossibly young, stylish girlfriend asks you to take her dancing. So you go. To a refurbished warehouse at the bleakest, darkest edge of town. You pay the gay bodybuilder with the metal shit sticking out of his face despite his look of incredible disdain. You walk in. Everything's black. The walls. The clothes. The bar. Neon lights awash in strobe. Blip blip blip@BIM BIM BIM bim bim WHOOSH whoosh whoosh . . "Gripped by Fear": Disco crunchy funk electronica with the hard metal beat taking lead & silly riff seeking ascendancy turning to eurobeat trash melody. Take a couple of shots. Calm down. Ebb and flow . . . Ebb and flow . . . Now step onto the football field disguised as dance floor.



"Junkdrome" hurts and hits on interstellar overdrive, a smooth synth dream teasing you beyond yourself . . . Then the walls get emptied for "Religion": Everything you've ever wanted, dreamed about while in the grip of the sweet swoon of sin. All aboard. Abandon all hope. Open up your body. To all possibilities. To impossible couplings. Harsh blips, atonal electronic interference, 120-180 bpms. Nauseating almost melody . . . "Happiness." Is it? It must be. You're moving. Your date is sweating. So are you. Why? Does it matter? Does anything matter? Front 242. This is the way. Step inside. (RRE, 7 West 22nd St., 4th Floor, NY, NY 10010) ds

GOV'T MULE

Dose

What started out originally as an offshoot project involving two members of the Allman Brothers Band has now become a tulltime gig for guitarist Warren Haynes and bassist Allen Woody. Dose is the second studio recording and third overall from Gov't Mule. Basically a power trio, the group does throw in some of the better elements of blues, heavy metal, and jazz on some cuts. When you really get down to it, though, this is basically big dumb-guy rock. Don't get me wrong; these guys are terrific players. Chops-wise, Gov't Mule can stand up to anybody. They insist however, on getting down in the dirt and sludge and rolling around in it, and oh yeah, did I tell You? They play real goddamn loud. But that goes with the territory. There's a chilling rendition of Son House's "John The Revelator," which, if you've properly prepared yourself with about four shots of Dickel, will make the hair on the back of your neck stand up. There's even a cover of the Beatles' "She Said, She Said," which, while remaining fairly faithful to the original, eventually ends up covered in pigshit. That's because Gov't Mule is from the South and no matter what they try, it'll end up sounding bluesy, sludgey, heavy and loud. This should not be a problem for you. (Capricorn) js

HAMPTON **GREASE BAND** Music to Eat

Re-release of a lit-

tle something originally done way back in '71 and promptly bombed. Disappeared. Never hit the big time. Too bad. It's fucking NUTS. Song number one, "Halifax," poots around with hilariously demented lyrics and very ho hum instrumentation for six and a half minutes and then decides to iust EXPLODE. By eight minutes, whoever the hell's playing guitar is spraying notes around like Machine Gun Kelly with his dick caught in a light socket. Except that, unlike Kelly's random spray, this shit seems to hit **EXACT** marks every time. As if when they checked the room after Kelly had departed they discovered that each and every bullet had somehow

managed to create a little half moon of a divot in the edges of everything. Just the edges. No square hits. No misses. Just exact catches on the edges. Dunno. Hard to explain. Hell of a fucking piece of guitar playing. Certain screaming runs of noise resolve themselves into a closely packed swarm of discrete notes on close examination. Gotta listen to it to appreciate it, I guess. Needless to say, it doesn't last long (NOBODY can play the guitar like that for very long before the constraints of the Krebs Cycle set in and things have to stop) before it subsides into further demento lyrics and general noodling around. But it refuses to lay down dead and re-erupts later on. Nearly twenty minutes of sheer hell. The Ramones would never approve, I'm quite

sure. Anyhoo, Music to Eat continues its Swiss cheese lurchings into its own brand of madness. "Maria," "Six," "Evans." Nutzo stuff. Some of it's holes, but some of it's just INCREDIBLE and is richly deserving of everybody's money. Tell your friends to go out and buy it and then don't apologize or make excuses if they don't like it. Fuck 'em if they can't take a joke. (Columbia/Epic) jm

HEPCAT Right on Time

This is one of the recent ska/reggae revival bands that at least sounds old school and genuine. They've grated original Wailers' three-part harmonies and Specials' horn charts onto a solid rhythmic foundation that neither expands nor cheapens the form.

The love songs and instros are agreeable, if somewhat derivative. But Hepcat's from L.A., not Kingston. Consequently, their compositions concerning Jamaican ghetto life seem second-hand. Still, one could do a lot worse. (Hellcat) df

JOAN JETT Fit To Be Tied (Great Hits)

You wanna know why girls don't, and probably never will, respect guys? Here: Dave Marsh, ex-Rolling Stone scribe - "Joan Jett is the female chuck berry" (lower case?); Tony Parsons, New Musical Express - "Joan Jett is the last rock n' roll star"; Joel Selvin, San Francisco Chronicle - "She brings together the basic elements of rock n' roll better than anyone else"; Jim Farber, New York Daily News - "Love



her because she ranks among the best, truest rockers there is.

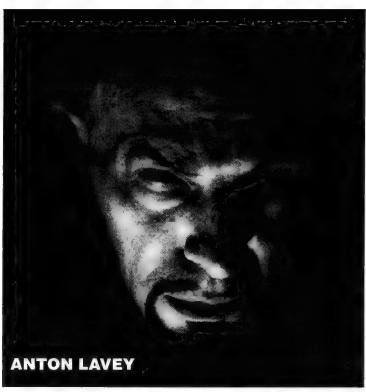
Do you really think these losers would have fallen all over themselves searching for superlatives if little Joanie didn't look so good in leather and chains? Doubtful. Very doubtful. Still, it must be admitted, Fit To Be Tied, kicks booty. If you like tuneful, hard melodic rock fronted by a gorgeous woman that is. And who doesn't? Aside from your soon to be ex-girlfriend once she discovers your hidden cachet of Runaways' records. Fuck her! There's plenty of fish in them primordial seas. There's only one Joan Jett. (Mercury)

KING CRIMSON The Nightwatch

The 1972-74 edition of King Crimson was not only that band's best lineup, it was also the best of the chops-heavy prog rock bands of that era. Starting with a powerhouse drum/bass combo of Bill Bruford and John Wetton and topped off by guitarist Robert Fripp at his most jaggedly inventive, this band played with improvisational daring that few rock band have approached. Granted, Wetton wasn't much of a singer, and violinist David Cross was a weak link. But the aforementioned trio was consistently stellar.

Pristinely recorded at Amsterdam in November 1973, The Nightwatch is the finest document yet of this combo, surpassing even the four-disc Great Deceiver set released in 1992. This particular evening provided the foundation for several tracks that later received considerable overdubs before their inclusion on Starless and Bible Black. Of those, the mathematic precision of "Fracture" stands out. In addition, there's a generous helping of Larks Tongues in Aspic and plenty of spontaneous jam sequences that hold together remarkably well. Despite its occasional self-indulgence, The Nightwatch is a good as prog rock gets. (Discipline Global Mobile) df

ANTON LAVEY
Satan Takes A Holiday
Nice career move by the
founder, and in all likelihood sole



member, of The Church of Satan. Dying that is. Sure to increase sales of an oddity like this: a collection of creepy organ/synthesizer instros, devilishly wicked interpretations of superannuated show tunes, and phantasmagoric operatic turns. The latter performed by diabolic cartoonist and film documentarian Nick Bougas. As an added bonus, Lavey's daughter, Blanche, chips in with two very effective Gothic bits for the Anne Rice crowd. It's all very spooky in a tasteful, lovely way and, almost needless to say, the perfect musical accompaniment for that sophisticated Samhain party you've been meaning to throw. Or those dark and stormy nights when the Ouija board is put into play. (Amarillo Records, 5714 Folsom Blvd., Suite 300, Sacramento, CA 95819) ds

MIDNIGHT OIL 20,000 Watt R.S.L.

Ozzite. Snappy. Crisp and clean as hell. Even when it rolls in the mud left from a freak rainstorm on the Nullabor. Joyce likes "Power And The Passion" a whole lot and so do I. And the rest of this is real good too.

These fellows are quite adept at the operation of the instruments they play. Definite A Team stuff. On top of that, lies a stratum of lyrics that actually SAY something every once in a while. Imagine that.

Nothing is overplayed. Nothing is underplayed.

Ripping good surf music for when it's double overhead plus, squarebottoms over a nasty ledge in the reef, and you're two hundred klicks from nowhere way way too far from Perth. Hope the damn car don't break down.

Lonesome. Lonesome in a very familiar and warming way.

This cd is a compilation of shit from '79 to '97. Weirdly enough, whoever put this one together actually seems to know what the heck they were about.

Pleasant bang and crack amongst the squallings and moans that are so pervasive elsewhere.

Thanks for this one, Dom. It's gonna see the player on a regular basis. (Columbia) jm

PAINKILLER Collected Works

At last, we ham-and-eggers can finally get our hands on the complete (well, almost) recordings of the group known as Painkiller. For those unfamiliar with them, the trio was (is?) comprised of Bill Laswell, M.J. Harris from Napalm Death long ago, and John Zorn, the enfant terrible of almost any genre of music you could name. I have an idea that

Laswell may have been the instigator of this whole thing but I don't know. So you've got drums, samples, bass, and alto sax, and what may have once passed for vocals combining for all that is unholy in heavy metal, dub, ambient, free jazz, and just plain noise, sometimes within the same number. Painkiller's stuff was hard to find at best, in some cases due to the artwork. Guts of a Virgin's cover showed a woman on a table having been opened up, showing a fetus inside. And, oh yeah, Mom's eves were open. Not to everyone's taste. Their second release, Buried Secrets had the manacled hands of killer Charles Schmid reaching into the Arizona desert and picking up the skull of one of his victims. Nice. Needless to say, the music was generally as disturbing as the art. Now in one nifty four disc set you get all the studio work, plus a live show from Osaka which I believe is different from an import titled Rituals which was really tough to uncover. The illustration for this doublesized cd gives us some guy in Katmandu after hanging himself on the day of remembrance. Charming. You can't buy this at Wal-Mart or Best Buy. But you need it all the same. Rarely do maniacs like these get a chance to go in and do whatever they want without worrying about offending at least someone. It's about as extreme as any of these fellows has gotten, before or after. Thanks to Tzadik for making it available. Oh, I forgot; it's Zorn's label. (Tzadik) is

QUADRAJETSPAY The Deuce

There are rock and roll bands and there are rock and roll bands. And then there are the Quadrajets. This is their third album. There will be more. And that is good as this approaches Raw Power in its intensity and no-frills approach to hard rock. Psychedelicized blues punk division. More importantly, the riffs are infectious, the guitars appropriately loud and distorted, the rhythm section congenitally incapable of anything approaching subtlety and the singer apparently unconcerned with such niceties as enunciation. In fact.

I'm not sure the vocalist is aware that lyrics were written for him. Or that he's singing to, or along with, anything. But then he is from Auburn, Alabama. (Estrus)

SCREW RADIO The Best Of

Screw Radio was a Los Angeles radio show broadcast from 1992 to '93. Hosted by whiny pencilneck Poindexter Stewart (Greg Ginn's alter ego?) and featuring instros by Ginn and crew, the show mixed discussions of sexrelated activity, social politics, music, and youth junk culture. Highlights of its six-month tenure are included on this two-disc set. Though vaguely reminiscent of the long-gone days of late-night, free-form FM radio, Stewart and his cohorts lack both insight and humor. Instead, they merely grate. Imagine your dumbest stoner buddy given free reign to babble about anything and everything. Typical of their drool is their exhortation not to buy Pearl Jam records. While they have the right idea, all they can say is that Pearl Jam suck. Yes, Stewart and his chums achieve the seemingly impossible: creating a radio program that's worse than Don & Mike! The liner notes say that these numbskulls may be making a comeback via the internet. One can only hope this is a threat and not a promise. (SST) df

SHAMAN, JHANKRI & NELE Music Healers of Indigenous Cultures

Shamanism was introduced to Western popular culture in Carlos Castaneda's series of Don Juan books, which have become staples of the New Age movement. The taint of the Age of Aquarius has infested many good ideas, often adding a ludicrous layer of horseshit jargon meant to be comforting to "spiritual searchers" no doubt. But the fact remains that witchcraft. magick, shamanism involve fascinating energies and bears kinship to the forbidden attitudes toward extremes of experience, poetry, plays and novels of the poete maudits.

The catalog of 18 third world medicine men seems to try to please both camps. It fails as a

comprehensive academic resource due to inconsistent or incomplete coverage and some poor editing. On the other hand, it's valuable simply because no other sources like this exist: lots of color photos, basic overviews of each healing tradition, and the star of this show - the accompanying CD. Essentially the book is an elaborate compact disc booklet, providing background for the songs, chants and spells. Let's face it, if you read Mircea Eliade's definitive study on shamanic magic, you aren't actually touched by the magic itself. This package brings you as close to the magic as you're going to get without actually being in the room with it.

Naturally, it seems ridiculous

to specify that these are "music healers"; shamanic magicians and priests use any tool they can get to fix what they can smoke, drugs, herbs, touch, performance . . . music and chanting are a pretty consistent part of the repertoire. It's funny how little things change from place to place -Native American healers, Vodou manbo's, Nepalese Jhankri, Tuvan shamen, Mayans, Tibetans, Spiritualist **Baptists on Saint** Vincent Island - all using similar ideas. When Burroughs visited the yage doctor in the western Amazon jungle, he may have heard something similar to the song of the Peruvian Ayahuasca (other name for yage) shaman included here. Want to get an idea what Artaud heard when he studied Tarahumara peyote rituals? Their magic also is represented.

Spare yourself the agony of the fore-word and introduction and go right to

the pix and music. The intro particularly makes a feeble effort to "contextualize" the information for New Agers, and here's where you'll find the greatest confusion between Western medical and psychological practice and shamanic activity. Let's be clear that titles like doctor, psychologist, ojha, ayahuascero, kangsinmu, etc., imply their own body of knowledge and credentials; sometimes they overlap; sometimes they don't work. What's really important are the differences - I'm not interested in reading about doctors or psychologists, but about other techniques for healing, enlightenment, and awareness. The rest of the book sticks to topics of greatest interest.

I like popular culture overviews like this because you get a cross section of information without a lot of footwork, research and intellectualization. A book like this can be one piece in the puzzle of a subject as complex as shamanism, and the unique angle of this package makes it essential for any level of exploration. (Ellipsis Arts, Box 305, Roslyn, NY 11576) jb

SOULFLY Soulfly

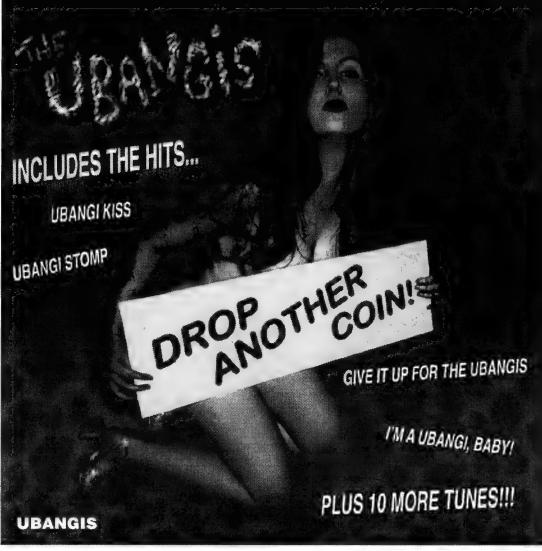
Sepultura was, in my opinion, one of the more interesting and progressive of what could be called heavy metal, or speed metal or, oh hell; I don't know. Whatever you want to call it, Sepultura were good, mainly



because they varied their speed and vocals enough so that you wouldn't get bored after twenty seconds or so. The leader of the group was Max Cavalera, a lovely young Brazilian lad who sported a Motorhead logo tattoo on his arm. I mean, you could tell the kid was on the right track, eh? Anyway, he's now formed a new group called Soulfly who rock with the best of 'em, but they also incorporate much of what I assume are traditional Brazilian rhythms and chants into their music. Andy Wallace mixed this stuff so you know it sounds great. (He's the guy who not only worked with Sepultura but with Slayer, Jane's Addiction, etc., et.) Max also enlists the aid of Mario Caldato of Beastie Boy fame, a dude from Cypress Hill, somebody from Dub War, and various other lunatics. So you don't really need me to tell you that the result of all of these contributions is a particularly lethal mix. At times Soulfly sound like Slayer jamming with Santana with the bass turned up. Like I said about the aforementioned Sepultura, this combo varies the tempos nicely so the songs don't blend into one long chant calling out for the resurrection of Abbadon or Tiamat. Makes for good driving music, too. (Roadrunner) is

UBANGIS Drop Another Coin

If you've never seen The Ubangis, well, that's not too surprising as they: (a) are very poor; (b) play trashy garage rock; and (c) appear to be very nice, if weird boys. Loosely translated this means The Ubangis: (a) can't afford to travel too far beyond Prince Georges County Maryland; (b) aren't terribly au courant and so even local clubs won't let them play on Monday nights; and (c) can't convince bookers to let them open for the likes of The Cramps on national tours. All of which is a shame because unlike most bands schooled in psychotronic movie-groovie ghoulie aesthetics this trio is the genuine article. Lead singer Brian Horrorwitz lives in a run-down, noisome apartment stuffed with weird toys, salacious magazines, Japanese monster videos and



highly obscure rock 'n' roll platters. Guitarist "Saucy" Randy Manos, the enforcer of the group and former fashion adviser to Hazil Adkins, works a six-string slapped together from discarded car parts and cat guts. Eric "U.M.F." Tavela lives in the backwoods of West Virginia and refuses to appear outside in anything but the skins of animals he has stalked and killed. None of these oddballs drink but after listening to Drop Another Coin you'd be hard pressed to believe it as music this determinedly sleazy and hopelessly uncommerical has traditionally been the sole province of demented alcoholics. But then The Ubangis don't really care what anyone thinks. Not even their mothers. We, despite their contempt for us, raise our bottles of Fighting Cock high and salute them . . .With our middle fingers extended. (Trash Palace, Box 2565. Silver Spring, MD 20915) ds

VAS DEFERENS ORGANIZATION Sweat Your Cheese, But Not in My Salad

Whooshy and swoopy. Like maybe it wants to be some of that weird-ass old Pink Floyd from back in the late 60's before they decided to make a swimming pool full of money.

Might be just the thing to spring on your buddies an hour after you spiked the diet coke with LSD.

Never actually gets up and DOES anything, but that's not what we're looking for here, is it?

The ok-o-meter reports: "OK." (Charnel House) jm

ROBERT "BILBO" WALKER Promised Land

Isn't it a shame that the mainstream music press pushes crap like The Spice Girls, a burnedout Patti Smith and an even more burned-out Bob Dylan down our throats when there's

great stuff being churned out on small, obscure labels. Like Rooster Blues Records with this Bilbo guy, a legendary jukejoint bluesman who at 59 has just been allowed to release his first disc. Known in the south as the Mississippi Liberace, Bilbo dresses in awful fright wigs and white suits with green sequined trim around the lapels and plays a white Fender stratocaster with the A-string removed. Which matters not a whit since he apparently doesn't bother to tune the damn thing. Still, our man has chops aplenty, a wicked hand vibrato and a tone best compared to Webb Pierce's voice (piercingly paint-peeling with some notes only dogs can probably hear). Bilbo's singing is equally strange. He sounds like a wounded marsupial and tends, when he's not yodeling insanely, to go way off key. Not such a bad thing when you forget the lyrics to most of the tunes. Most

of which are covers - Sam
Cooke, BB King, Chuck Berry,
Hank Thompson/Kitty Wells none of which would, or could,
ever be mistaken for the originals. But who wants faithful covers? Not me. Not you. Beauty
should be convulsive. Or at the
very least, drunkenly inept.
(Rooster Blues Records, 232
Sunflower Ave., Clarksdale, MS
38614) jo/ds

ANDRE WILLIAMS Mr. Rhythm THE FIVE DOLLARS Motor City Doo-Wops ANDRE WILLIAMS Fat Back & Corn Liquor

Have mussy! Hep yourself! Mr Rhythm is back! Andre Williams, mainstay of Detroit's Fortune label during the mid to late 50s has returned. The Regency label out of Canada has released two CDs worth of Andre old "hits" (under both his name and The Five Dollars, one of the groups he fronted), including the clinically-insane-from-too-much-Tuskegee Belle pomade-in-thehair dances ("Bacon Fat," "The Greasy Chicken," "Do The Bacon Fat"), odes to sex with underage females and the resulting jail terms if caught ("Jail Bait," "Jailhouse Blues," "Pulling Time"), tons of greasy testosterone-fueled, let's-bump-uglies teenage doo-wop love paeans, and genuine weirdness ("Pass The Biscuits Pleas," and my personal fave, "The Bells"). These are essential MUST-HAVE discs (especially Mr. Rhythm) for discriminating dilettantes of early rock 'n' roll everywhere. As the Crypt Records' catalog describes it: "some SERIOUS shit to fuck to . . . " To borrow an old Frank Zappa quote, "You don't listen to this music, you wear it in your

For the better part of the past four decades, Mr. Andre has eschewed performing, opting to work as a record producer and A&R man for various Detroit-based labels. He has refused numerous requests for interviews, reportedly telling a would-be interviewer/writer from Chicago several years ago that he would only talk to Penthouse magazine, and they'd have to pay him \$50,000 up front. He

came out of retirement in 1996 to record Fat Back & Corn Liquor for George Paulus' St. George label. Accompanied by The El Dorados vocal group and a backup band including Pretty Things' axeslinger Dick Taylor, Mr. Williams assumes the role of a shit-faced drunk blues/R&B singer (song titles include "I'm So High," "Gin" and the title track), albeit still with a high greasy trash content. His voice pretty much shot to Hell (and he wasn't Screaming Jay Hawkins in the first place), Andre doesn't so much sing as rasp his way through remakes of some of his and others' classics ("Jail Bait," "Put A Chain On It," hilarious retake of "The Bells," "Who Do You Love," "Riot in Cell Block #9," "I Ain't Superstitious," etc.). Enjoyable stuff, but not quite up to his earlier standards. Mr. Andre is also doing the occasional live show with the aforesaid El Dorados - he was in NYC in early 12/97 performing to rave reviews. The latest issue of Living Blues (#137) and Rocktober (#17) have in-depth articles and interviews with the great man.

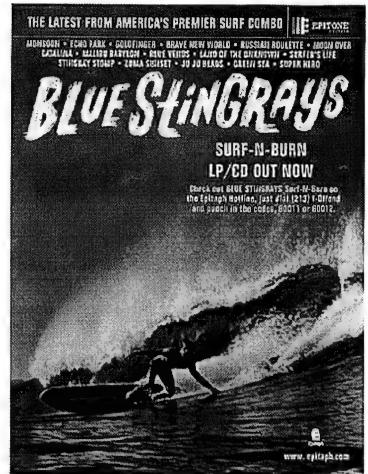
NOTE: Also highly recommended - Cub Koda's latest solo effort from about three years ago. Abba Dabba Dabba (Schoolkids Records SKR 1512 - it's the CD with the tasteful cover of Mr. Koda playing the guitar and wearing a cheap looking gorilla suit and even cheaper looking pink lounge lizard jacket), which includes several tributes to Fortune Records. The Cubmeister does his versions of "Bacon Fat" and "The Greasy Chicken," as well as answering the question on everybody's lips these days: What would "Shuffle Off to Buffalo" and Gary Lewis & The Playboys' "She's Just My Style" sound like if sung by Howlin' Wolf?) (Regency/Regency/St. George Records) jo

ELMO WILLIAMS & HEZEKIAH EARLY It Takes One To Know One HASIL ADKINS What The Hell Was I Thinking?

Fat Possum's never-ending search through the smoke-filled and potentially violent juke joints and backwoods of Mississippi

has, once again, paid dividends. This time, they have uncovered Elmo Williams and Hezekiah Early, two more unknown, unpolished, nutty bluesmen, both worthy additions to their roster of artists. In addition, the label has also signed the well-known (to troubled people), if extremely unstable, West Virginia wild man, Hasil Adkins (AKA "The Haze," AKA "The Hunchin' Man"), in an apparent attempt to bring his sweet sounds and many musical moods to a wider listening audience.

First, the Williams/Early album. It Takes One To Know One: Like R.L. Burnside, the late Junior Kimbrough, T-Model Ford (the closest parallel, soundwise, to this duo), and their other label mates, Elmo and Hezekiah attack the blues in a primitive, unrestrained manner that always seems to be either (1) on the verge of running off the tracks and crashing or (2) dragging you into a pulsating groove that hypnotizes you dead on the tracks, where you'll get run over anyway. These guys are obviously louder than Hell live, with Williams' guitar heavily distorted through a full Fender Bandmaster stack, and Early's usually right-on-the-money drum bashing and harp-blowing (Which he does simultaneously a first, I believe - using electricians' tape and a mike stand, per the liner notes) providing the rhythm. Elmo sings in a gruff. soaked-in-gin & muscatel-for-58 vears voice that suits this music perfectly. Think T-Model Ford, only make it louder, add more distortion, a harp, less bizarre lyrics - and hope or pray that neither of these guys displays a penchant for exposing themselves at their live shows (like the liquored-up T-Model apparently does, per three different sources from three different shows!). This is not your standard 12 bar blues fare - the appropriately titled "Insane Instrumental," the wackiest thing on the album, sounds like a cross between the pre-Trout Mask Replica Captain Beefheart and The Yardbirds. Overall, an impressive debut from this duo another must-have, fun filled probably alcohol-fueled CD from the friendly Fat Possum folks!



Now, the new Hasil Adkins' album, and the \$25,000 question: What would Fat Possum do to Haze's sound? (To those unfamiliar with The Hunchin' Man, this crazed hillbilly has been recording since the late 50's, and is a regular headliner at various "sleazefest"-type festivals throughout the world.) Did the owner of Fat Possum lose a bet with Billy and Miriam of Norton Records, Hasil's most recent label? Well, at first listen, it appears the new recording company is trying to tone down his goony-bird nuttiness more than just a tad. On further listens, What The Hell appears to be a cross between his last two studio albums on Norton - the laid-back "country commodity stylings" of "Achy Breaky Ha Ha Ha" and the insane rockabilly of "The Wild Man." Fat Possum seems to be trying to strike a happy medium between these two extremes - a Haze sampler for new listeners? But, sadly, hardly any of Adkins' bizarre fetishes and obsessions are brought up on this thing - no new Chicken dances, no references to FDR-era work relief programs, no odes to decapitating dates, no atrocious drum solos (he's a one-man band, and plays the drums with his feet). And there's only one mention of commodity meat and peanut butter ("Up On Mars"), only a couple of examples of his schizophrenic duets featuring weird falsetto voices (his remake of "Ugly Woman" and the Martians talking in "Up On Mars"), no imitations of police car sirens, and goddammit, not one mention of "hunchin"! If you're a Haze-ophile (Hazeaholic?) like me, you might ask at this juncture: "Just what in the Hell WAS he thinking?" About half of the songs are nondescript, slow, country ballads (featuring, of course, his "happy quitar" - as usual, sounding out of tune). "Beautiful Hills," for example, sounds like a rewrite of Roy Acuff's "Precious Jewel." Nothing too strange here. There are several rockers, notably the aforementioned remake of "Ugly Woman," "You're Gonna Miss Me (his version of "That's Alright, Mama"), and a possible gem in "Stay With Me," which features his screeching harmonica and

something about hacksaws and buzzsaws in the lyrics. Then, there's "Up On Mars," which is very difficult to describe although it's the only real evidence of Adkin's severe mental problems.

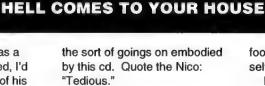
Overall, a disappointment. On the other hand, God doesn't always create a Grand Canyon every time He steps up to the plate. There are also lesser works - hills, rivers, mountains, etc. This CD is just a lesser

work. While it isn't bad as a sampler for the uninitiated, I'd recommend almost any of his Norton LP's (most of which contain hints in the liner notes such as "For best results, listen to this album with a bucket over your head!") ahead of this. The best possible intro to Haze however is Chicken Walk, a German import CD (on the Dee Jay label) - thirty of his older cuts from the 50's and 60's, all of the "hits," hardly any filler. Hell - I should have been suspicious about this new disc when I didn't see "vodka" listed as one of Hasil's instruments in the liner notes. (Fat Possum) jo

VARIOUS Physical Estness: Est Mu

Physical Fatness: Fat Music Vol. III

Looks to me as if playing in the garage has some sort of generic effect on the people who do it. They all start sounding the same. That washed-up old junkie from the Velvet Underground, despite the hideous desperation of her later years, had a wonderful word for



This stuff was certainly cool as hell when it was new and dangerous, but now that it's become mandatory to allow you to make a sensible impression on the cool-o-meter used by all and sundry, as they live their pinched little lives of meaningless posing and posturing, it's getting more than a little tired. Time somebody invented something a little different, is the way I see it, this folderol is no longer avant, nor is it garde.

I shall be pilloried for my heresy; I have no doubt. But it was long ago and far away when I quit giving a shit about "fitting in" with whomever or whatever had set itself up as the latest final arbiter of what was the in thing.

Fuck you, assholes!

The only light in this tunnel of "group individuality" is My Pop The Cop. Funny as hell! Maybe that's what we need, eh? The ability to crack a decent joke? Laugh like all get out at our own

foolishness and quit taking ourselves so damn seriously?

Fat Chance! (Fat Wreck Chords) jm

VARIOUS

Hell Comes To Your House

The compact disc debut of what, feels, sounds like a seminal punk compilation. Social Distortion! Red Cross! 45 Grave! Why does this seem to put most of today's retro-punk bands to shame? Because the genre was nascent and everyone was just doing what they felt like. No attempt to make meaningful statements. Unless complaining about mom & dad & girls & high school and celebrating the joys of drug taking and beer drinking constitute meaningful statements. They don't. But the lyrics sure are a hoot - faux anger and angst wrestling with self-loathing - and the music, a delightful mix of punk, hardcore and Goth, never fails to convey the delight these misanthropes took in fashioning such noisy bombast. (Time Bomb, 31652. Laguna Beach, CA 92651) ds ■



Guys know what they like. Especially when it comes to horror films. What they don't understand, is how to go about getting their wives and/or girlfriends interested in fright flicks. Well, talking about the auteur theory or juxtaposition of dream states ain't gonna make it happen. C'mon, get real, no woman is going to let you intellectualize something they've spent a lifetime avoiding. So here's what you do: start them off with the early arty stuff like Nosferatu, Cabinet of Dr. Caligari and Vampyr, where they'll learn that the uncanny can be moving, beautiful and poetic. Keep on in this vein with eerie atmospheric works like I Walked With A Zombie. The Black Cat and something fairly contemporary a la Eraserhead. Soon, your better half will start to come around. Do not, however, take this as a sign that she's ready for Blood Feast or Evil Dead. Women will never be ready for Blood Feast or Evil Dead. You got that? These are films made by guys for guys to watch with other guys. Members of the female persuasion are constitutionally incapable of enjoying, much less watching, scenes in which intestines are tossed about like Frisbees. Nor will you ever be able to screen Texas Chain Saw Massacre for your life partner. No matter how many times you tell her that The Museum of Modern Art purchased a copy for their permanent collection! I mean, you can quote all sorts of relevant pas-

sages of Carolyn Chute's Men, Women and Chainsaws while Tobe Hooper's film is running but let me tell ya, as soon as that weird looking hick cuts his own hand after declaiming on the glories of working in a slaughterhouse, that gal of yours is going to pack up everything she owns and move to another state. Forget about Texas Chain Saw Massacre. Or Psycho, the greatest horror film ever made. You think it's an accident that film professors unspool Shadow of A Doubt when attempting to illustrate the mordant wit of Hitch rather than that seminal work? I don't think so. The best you can hope for is a begrudging respect for the "uncanny" (Freud is good on this). So avoid Romero and Argento and Cronenberg. Ghosts not zombies, decent people trapped in nightmares not of their own making not axe-murderers, are the most you can hope for. To get to something as harmless as The Fog you're going to have to first cultivate an appreciation for The Old Dark House and Carnival of Souls. And even then you'll never be able to make the mother of your children see the humor in tongue in cheek exercises like Scream or Revenge of the Living Dead. For women, there's nothing funny about evisceration or brain eating. Or Dice Clay or professional wrestling or the Sex Pistols. Or almost anything you really like. Aside from sex . . . Read on, what follows is important . . .

Ozzy's impeccable, fool-proof rating system:



el stinko, flat upon opening



barely worth interupting a good piss for



ok, but leave the stereo on in the backround



now we're talking not bad



hot shit, skip the x-files for this



who needs beer?

A/V geek heaven

OK, class, listen up! Today's ethical conundrum is this: Is it acceptable to depict acts of depravity and senseless violence if they are drawn so ludicrously as to be risible? You say you don't care? You say you don't even know what "risible" means? Ah then, my dear sir, allow me to introduce you to THE **NECRO FILES**, a film so delightfully obscene it brings new meaning to the term. So obscene it is likely to offend even the most chronic of masturbators. So obscene you dare not tell anyone you know of its existence. Why? Because a man is stabbed to death with his own penis, a plastic baby doll is knifed repeatedly before gaining the power of flight, an oatmeal-faced ghoul-



rapist lurches through downtown Olympia, Washington stroking his three foot phallus without anyone noticing and you find yourself laughing hysterically. Ozzy, you say, "This word 'obscene,' I do not think it means what you think it means." Yes, you are right, "silly" is a better word. Still, as an exercise in devil-may-care audacity this is mighty impressive. Just keep it to yourself.



So what to get a misanthropic forty-eight year old billionaire businessman for his birthday? How about membership in a club that twists and distorts reality until you no longer can tell down from up? Yes, that's the premise of THE GAME and that's what we're supposed to believe a controlfreak like Michael Douglas would let brother Sean Penn give him as a gift. Alright, this is the movies so we'll go along for the ride. And what a ride it is: shootings, hot blondes, a taxi-cab ride into San Francisco bay, blackmail and much, much more. Douglas opts out early but he learns that the game ends only when "they" want it to end. The trick, of course, is discerning just who the hell "they" be. Which Douglas and the viewer never figure out. Until the end. Which is only the beginning. Get it? No, you're not supposed to. That's why you have to see, or rather, play The Game. Although the flick was panned by most critics,

David Fincher, the director of Seven, does a pretty nice job of keeping us guessing as well as keeping us from questioning how all of San Francisco can conspire to turn their heads while Michael Douglas is being driven slowly insane.



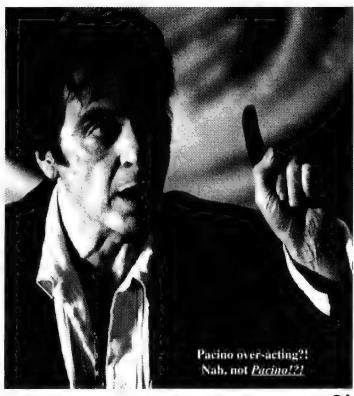
Taylor Hackford (Officer and A Gentleman, Dolores Claiborne) is a pretty clever director. So, given a rather hackneyed script - rube but brilliant Gainesville lawyer (Keanu Reeves) uproots wife and moves to multinational New York law firm run by Satan (Al Pacino) - he tricks it out in flashy postmodern sets, gorgeous cine-

matography, and unnerving spe-

cial effects in a desperate attempt to keep your mind from wandering. Which it probably will whenever Mr. Pacino is off screen. When Al is front and center though the flick really catches, ahem, fire. Pacino clearly relishes the role of the dark puppeteer and plays every scene as if his life depended on it. Truly, Ozzy has not seen such delightful

scenery chewing since, well, since the last Al Pacino movie. And the denouement in Al's law office wherein he seeks to tempt Reeves to mate with this gorgeous redhead and spawn the anti-Christ is simply a brilliant bit of cynical moviemaking. If the rest of **DEVIL'S ADVOCATE** was as involving and amusing as the last twenty minutes Advocate would have been Academy Award material. Still, the film is gorgeous to look at, has plenty of nudity, stunning set pieces, and never really allows us to get too involved with the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune leveled at the wooden Reeves and his moronic spouse.







An unhappy, homely middle-aged executive trapped in a loveless marriage is coerced by a mysterious company into undergoing plastic surgery, faking his death and starting life anew. As Rock Hudson in a swank Malibu pad where he is waited on hand and foot while he paints all day. When he puts the brushes down our "reborn" protagonist gets to party with beautiful wild women

and hobnob with suave executives. For some unearthly reason this makes Rock unhappy. If you can buy into this, you're

sure to enjoy SECONDS, a John Frankenheimer film which, since its release in 1966, has garnered something of a cult reputation. While hardly the surreal masterpiece its proponents have made it out to be, the flick is rather creepy thanks to a number of disquieting set pieces, the stunning cinematography of James Wong Howe and an appropriately eerie score courtesy of Jerry Goldsmith. Ultimately, however, the film is betrayed by the rather formulaic script which, after a lengthy buildup, allows things to fall apart way too quickly, and a curiously restrained performance by Rock Hudson who only really comes alive at the shocking conclusion. But perhaps that's the point of this exercise; it is, in a very real sense, the study of a man who doesn't realize he's dead until he's looking

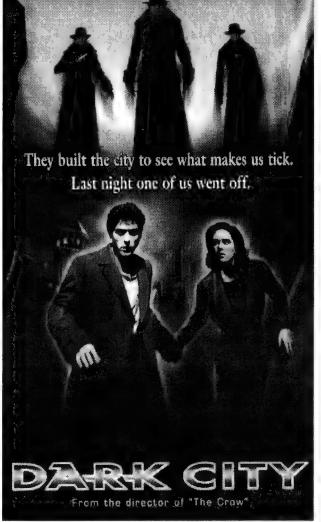
death in the face. Perhaps, Ozzy needs to take another look. Until then he's only giving this self-consciously arty piece.



My God, people who look and dress like The Addams Family's Uncle Fester have taken over the world! And they're not letting the sun come up. And they're consistently changing the look of the

city by mechanical eruptions and sinkings of its buildings. And they're constantly switching people's memories so know one ever really knows who or what they are. How can the aliens do this? They get all the humans to fall asleep at midnight. This latter bit Ozzy couldn't really figure out but he was so dazzled by the sci-fi noir sets, unsettling lighting, dazzling cinematography and mindbending special effects that he really wasn't bothered by this all too much. Nor was Mr. Fide disturbed by the fact that the skimpy

> story on which the filmmakers hung their movie - protagonist discovers he's a killer and has no memory of murdering anyone - was cribbed from Strange Days. Nor was he upset that the look of DARK CITY was a xerox copy of Jeunot's City of Lost Children. Nor was he irritated by the dreadful acting of all involved - save Kiefer Sutherland who, knowing he's been given a silly part, decides to walk and talk it like he's Max Schrek's grandson. Alright, this ain't the work of genius a number of wags are making this flick out to be; still, Oz is willing to bet that this mindless nonsense, constructed as it is like a disturbing dream, will force you, yes, despite every brain cell crying out in protest, to surrender to its illogic.





"A STORY SO CRAFTY THAT JUST WHEN YOU THINK YOU GOT IT FIGURED OUT, IT DOES A SLY FIGURE EIGHT-



PALMETTO is that new subgenre of film Ozzy likes to call feu noir or softboiled. You know, the kind of exercise where all that Raymond-Chandler-mean-streets stuff is played tongue in cheek because all concerned are too hip and schooled in the conventions of the lowdown potboiler to take it seriously. To make it work, really work, you have to have a great cast. Palmetto doesn't; thus we're forced to rely on the intricacies of plot for our entertainment. Which isn't such a bad thing when you have a director like Volker Schlondorff who clearly understands the conventions of noir. Woody Harleson stars as a muckraking reporter recently sprung from jail thanks to an overturn of his conviction who proceeds to immediately jump headfirst into a fake kidnapping plot orchestrated by the rich and very bored Elisabeth Shue with

her stepdaughter (Chloe Sevigny). Woody is offered fifty thou to make the call to Shue's millionaire husband, pretend he has the stepdaughter, and then pick up the cash. Why the Woodman wants to get involved with such silliness when he has Gina Gershon not only waiting at home but supplying him with pin money is a mystery. Naturally such idiocy must be punished and so Woody is forced to spend the rest of the movie trying to get out

of one jam after the other. Jams which get worse and worse. As we laugh harder and harder. Despite things getting more and more vile. Such a clever film; if only they had peopled it with actors who knew how to grab our attention. And hold it.



Innocents are being struck down all over New York City and its citizens and police force are powerless to stop the carnage. So what else is new? Well the people doing the killing are claiming *GOD TOLD ME TO*. God in the person of a glowing hippie with long golden hair dressed in flowing white garments. Who lives underground and is slowly, but surely, taking control of the City.

But there's a cop who won't lay down despite what the religious leaders tell him and who can't be killed despite God's earnest attempts. This Larry Cohen (Q, It's Alive) film, recently rereleased in wide-screen format, is an astonishingly accomplished work, one of the true wonders of low-budget cinema. An audacious examination of the philosophical and ethical puzzles at the heart of religious faith in the quise of exploitation that confounds and amazes with repeated viewings.



So the Disney company sank about sixty katrillion dollars trying to make THE PEACEMAKER a hit but the American public seeing George Clooney and Nicole Kidman headlining were having none of it. And neither were you. A pity, because you missed a damn good action-adventure flick. A renegade Russian general stages a dual train collision - one of them carrying nuclear warheads - figuring that the ensuing atomic blast will cover his theft of the weapons. Back in Washington, Lt. Col. Thomas Devoe (Clooney) convinces ace scientific presidential flack Julia Kelly (Kidman) the accident was manufactured. The pair then light out to eastern Europe to recover the nukes and in the process get into all manner of shenanigans while desperately trying to avert World War III. Somehow we end



shots of spurting hoses and

foaming waves. Hot enough for

ya? No? Well there's a catfight

scene between Campbell and

Richards that turns into

a muff-diving tryst and

a threeway with Dillon

and Campbell and

bit was so steamy

people were actu-

ally walking out of

the theater at

Somewhere

amidst all of

this salacious-

ness there's a

so many hilari-

ous plot twists -

one of which

involves shys-

ter lawyer Bill Murray, another

centering on

too tightly-

great campy noir story with

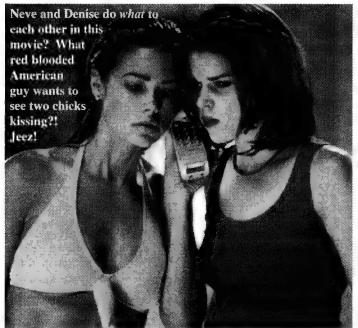
Oz's screening.

Richards. The latter

up in Manhattan which is, on the face of it, ridiculous, but everything is staged so effectively you'll hardly notice. Clooney is a joy to watch, he really is a natural, and Kidman, in a thankless role, manages to be quite convincing as the intellectual getting a crash course in the ways of the cold, cruel world. The special effects are quite special and the car chase in the middle of the film is the best thing of its kind since Bullet. Truly a roller-coaster ride of thrills and chills.



And the winner for sleaziest mainstream movie of 1998? Trust Oz here, even though only a third of the year is gone, John McNaughton's (Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer) WILD THINGS cannot possibly be outslimed. "Okay," you say, "impress me with the general nastiness of things. Just give me a taste." Alright, hows about Neve Campbell and Denise Richards as teenage lesbian lovers cooking up a scheme with their high school guidance counselor (Matt Dillon) to fleece Richard's slut of a mother (Theresa Russell) of eight million dollars? Oh yes, all the gals thus far mentioned get naked. In fact every single woman, even the sometimes out-of-focus extras, wear tight clothing so director McNaughton can zoom in on whomever he likes for close-ups of butts or breasts or thighs Which he does while intercutting



Bacon - the filmmakers had to save a couple of them for the, get this, credit sequences. Oz would love to tell you more but, to loosely paraphrase Shakespeare (or is that Ralph Kramden?): the film will have to be the thing, to lower standards and convince the conscience of

wound cop Kevin

the incessant need for a ring-ading-ding.



TEENAGE DOLL is not a pretty picture. This cannot be a pretty picture and be true. Roger Corman circa 1957 giving us the low down on the delinquent scene. Where it's always night and the dawn just a silly romantic notion. A high school gal, played by a beautiful

ingenue, accidentally kills a member of a girl gang and is made to run through ramshackle sets - warehouses, plaster tenements, auto junkyards - populated by badly aging jds and their poorly coifed molls. She should have known better than to get involved with a bootlegging



So who is this little old lady chatting with David Letterman? And why is her picture popping up in all the New York dailies? Because her name is Doris Wishman and they are holding a film festival for her in the Big Apple. Once upon a time she made what

called "roughies." Doris made both kinds. She wasn't very good but she didn't care. For this she has been compared to Godard. Unlike Godard, however, Doris Wishman is never boring. She has simple stories to tell and enjoys not telling them as the stories are simple and we understand them almost from the get go. So instead of narrative we get lots of shots of feet and buildings and sequences with people not really listening while other people are talking to them and

scenes with girls taking off lingerie and putting it back on again. BAD GIRLS GO TO HELL is probably Ozzy's favorite Wishman film for no other reason than the fact that the sets are all done in late fifties moderne style - sectional couches, fringe, lamps with rough-textured stems and oddly shaped shades, wood furniture laminated so as to look artificial. There's also a really wonderful film score that adroitly mixes sleazy jazz noir stylings and Bartok string menace. And,

really, a lot more, but rent the damn thing, and discover the crazy cool world of a truly original filmmaker. (Video Vault)



Elvis-wannabe. '50s high school cautionary documentary narrative made over as existential dialogue. Cops as impossibly stiff stock figures. The safe-house has mom in pig-tails dressed as a Bavarian peasant from a Universal '30s horror film married to a caricature middleaged bank executive. She's a drunk. He's an idiot. No way out. The boys rumble.

The girl, and two of the delinquent hoydens surrender to the police. The rest of the J.D. debs retreat to Freddy's for beers. Why not. (Video Vault)



they call "nudies." These were films with naked girls and men doing bad things to each other. Nothing much was shown because it was the sixties. Later in the seventies they still couldn't show anything but they let the men slap and kick the naked women. These movies they





IDOLS OF PERVERSITY: FANTASIES OF FEMININE EVIL IN FIN-DE-SIECLE CULTURE

Bram Dijkstra (1986/88) Oxford University Press

In the good old days, men bent their backs out in the dirty marketplace or the mine. Women stayed home to clean, raise the kids, and wear nice duds bought with their husbands' hard-earned cash. They were protected, and men accrued status depending on how well their wives showed off their spending power. The sanctity of this arrangement was often immortalized in the artwork of the day.

Presumably that's how it worked for the middle and upper classes. But with the industrial revolution, this idyllic arrangement was screwed. Industrialized factories made the few very rich, and the remaining breadwinners nearly obsolete. It became hard to make a buck. The artistic imagery changed, too. Instead of being immortalized as the well-dressed, saintly "angel of the house," woman suddenly symbolized the greedy competitor, semen-lusting ingrate.

All in all, bad time to be female, says Bram Dijkstra, in . Idols of Perversity By the mid-1800s, Woman in art, philosophy, and literature tended to be portrayed as either the incarnation of evil, the epitome of lust and selfishness, or a simpering paragon of stupidity. This viewpoint was underwritten by the unholy troika of Charles Darwin, philosopher Herbert Spencer, and the German "craniologist" Carl Vogt, who formed a small but deadly mutual admiration society.

Their association was cemented by their low placement of Woman on the evolutionary scale. Schopenhauer agreed: "...women are directly fitted for acting as the nurses and teachers of our early childhood by the fact that they are themselves childish, frivolous, and short-sighted; in a word, they are big children all their life long - a kind of intermediate stage between the child and the full-grown man, which is Man in the strictest sense of the word."

Making the rest of us, what, big hairless house pets? All this is grist for Dijkstra's historical and cultural analysis. He indicts social scientists Darwin, Schopenhauer, and Vogt for gross misogyny. Pokes fun at a "scientific method" that would earn any high school sophomore an "F". For example, early "sexologists" often quoted passages from Nana -Emile Zola's novel - as confirmation of their case study data. The scientists' literary equivalents were those authors who turned misogynist theorizing into models for living. The narratives of Zola, Thomas Hardy (Jude the Obscure), and Frank Norris (McTeague) - to name a few -helped popualrize helpful homilies like: "A woman is never raped unless she wants to be."

In the 19th century it became the mode to quote "scientific truth" rather than religion to



justify the oppression of weaker beings. Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, published in 1859, made it acceptable that the biggest (whitest, richest) guys got the cream of everything, the best food and babes, and nuts to the rest. Christian responsibility and charity suddenly seemed beside the point, unless one needed good PR. After reading *Idols of Perversity*, I understand the Republican Party a lot better.

But back to the book. Dijkstra reexamines many images of Academic art that once caught the critics' eyes and set the public taste. He bravely proposes new categories for the welter of classical subject matter cluttering these canvasses. His new labels point out a concentrated campaign against women, children, and minorities, particularly Jews and Blacks. Dijkstra's titles seem wryly amusing, until one ponders what such images must have done to the already-cloistered lives and nonexistent opportunities of nineteenth century women.

Portrayed before mid-century as homemaking nuns, women soon progressed to being painted, drawn and sculpted as naturat weaklings, as shown in the chapter titled "The Cult of Invalidism." Next. females became desperate victims spring-loaded to sacrifice themselves for a man, like the mad Lady of Shallot, in "Ophelia and Folly." Then enter the cult of woman as corpse, in painting with such cov titles: "The Dead Lady," "Dead Woman," "The Fate of Beauty," "Study of a Dead Woman." By 1870, my personal favorite emerged: "The Collapsing Woman," a slew of works in which otherwise robust, healthy-looking females were always posed limply, draped over various items of furniture or each other as if chronically exhausted. Early prototypes for Calvin Klein clothing ads? Nope. Those pesky artists had been reading again, and what the savants were saying was:

Guess what women are always doing in their spare time, alone or with each other? That's right. Those flaccid lasses were simply worn out; life was one big party of nonstop masturbation, or one lesbian orgy after another.

Most women artists were as willing as their male peers to jump on the anti-woman theme. In her rosy, homey works, Mary Cassatt touts the theme of woman as big child, surrounded by children. Some did deviate from the accepted view. Ever heard of Ella Ferris Pell? At the French Salon Exhibition of 1890 her exquisitely rendered "Salome," a technically brilliant portrait of a young, strong, confident woman, human rather than female demon, "was greeted with stony silence" by critics. A colleague at that show, Juana Romani, had painted Salome in the approved, orthodox style: "a petulant, snaked-eyed, very nasty creature." Guess which one the French government bought for the state?

In years to come, the stylistically advanced by ideologically timed Cassatt was hailed as a revolutionary. Pell "was ignored as an artist, disowned by her relatives, and buried in a pauper's grave."

Dijkstra scrutinizes accepted, seemingly innocuous classical images of women and minorities in nineteenth century art (remember all those slide in Art Appreciation 101?) and draws a line from them directly to Nazi Germany. In his opinion, art's visual representation of social theory added up, eventually, to sanctioned genocide. In an interesting visual procession the reader is shown woman's progression in art from Household Nun to Invalid to Corpse to Broken-backed Nymph posed for "therapeutic rape" (another delightful philosophic concept) to Poisonous Flower, finally metamorphosing to snake, sphinx, and vampire. The list culminates in the most popular and oft-painted image of the time, the deathdealing (and always very Jewish looking) "Priestess of Man's Severed Head" - Salome wickedly contemplating the results of her handiwork, the pitiful corpse of a man sprawled at their feet. And then there's Judith, with that really big nail . . .

So by linking Woman, the idol of perversity, with the "childish black man" and the "bestial Jew." did the philosophers, writers, and artists of the 19th century pave the way for the "Ubermensch" of Hitler's Third Reich? Dijkstra's arguments are sometimes histrionic, occasionally overstated. But after reading Idols of Perversity, and viewing the 300 or so reproductions of often bizarre painting, drawings, and sculpture that back him up, I'm almost convinced. I might burn my old art history textbooks, if I hadn't already - Gott in Himmel! sold them long ago to the next batch of unsuspecting freshmen. (Lenore Hart)

THE DAY AFTER ROSWELL
Philip Corso
(1997) Pocket Books
AREA 51, THE DREAMLAND
CHRONICLES
David Darlington
(1997) Henry Holt & Co.
AN ENCYCLOPEDIA OF
CLAIMS, FRAUDS, AND
HOAXES OF THE OCCULT
AND SUPERNATURAL
James Randi
(1995) St. Martin's Griffin

Let's start with The Day After Roswell. It's killer. But not on the terms it was written in. Far from it indeed. Were you to search the four corners of the Earth for a compendium more packed with phlogiston, flummery, and general foolishness, you couldn't do better than The Day After Roswell.

HooWEE is this thing ever a dog! Just a major piece of shit! Brother Corso was a by god colonel in the fucking Army and leans so heavily on that little credit that it's hard to believe. My guess is that it's all he's got

going for him and he's gonna milk the sonofabitch for all it's worth.

In a nutshell, Sir Corso was given the superdooper toppest most secretest file in all the world, the Roswell File, and then modestly proceeded to use it to give all humanity: a.) night vision goggles; b) integrated circuit chips; c.) the laser; and d.) a bygolly death ray! Lotsa other stuff too.

And we can take a look at his recounting of the development of the laser to figure out the grasp this goofus has on common, oh so very common, technology. To wit: The dumbski don't even know how a FLASHLIGHT works! Go get a fucking flashlight and turn it on and point it at something. If you're not in some kind of smoke filled room, or a serious fog bank, you'll quickly notice that between the business-end of your flashlight and whatever the hell it's lighting up, there's nothing to be seen, yes? Well guess what? Corso doesn't understand this. The dummy thinks only lasers have that characteristic. What a dope! And it just gets better from there. Much better.

Among other things that our aliens who crashed into the desert were capable of doing was antigravity. And Corso don't stop there. Nope. He goes on to say that antigravity is done with a MAGNETIC wave. Obviously, not only has this guy never checked into Maxwell's equations, he's never even HEARD of Maxwell. To conflate electromagnetism and gravity is to trumpet your ignorance from the rooftops. Go ask one of your buddies in the physics undergraduate classes if you don't believe me.

Corso also involves a passel of famous names in his little story. All of whom are dead and can't call him on what he's saying. Somewhere, Richard Feynman isn't rolling over in his grave, he's roaring with laughter so hard he's crying. Corso



apparently figures we're so damn stupid that NONE of us have checked into any of his "reference" material.

At first, I was amused by this. But as I continued to read the book I got madder and madder. Corso is, with great deliberation and malice (or phenomenally deep ignorance) aforethought, contributing to the Culture of Bullshit that is drowning everything in it's path. To the extent that us common folk are ignorant and blinded by nonsense, we can be better manipulated by corporations, governments, and the rest. I'm sick of it! There's not nearly enough room here in this essay to enumerate Corso's fantastic degrees of folderol. Cattle mutilations, CIA/KGB cabals, government coverups, and god knows what else.

In one regard, Corso is pretty clever. He employs the Big Lie. And the more people with at least half a brain in their heads cry, "That's a load of poop!" the more Corso can point to them and say, "See, I told you so. It's all a big coverup." How the hell do you fight that? I'll tell you how, do your damn homework and find out how the real world is really put together! We can't all know everything, but all of us together will cover pretty much all the bases, if we just take the time to FIND OUT. And an informed populace is the strongest antidote to the poisonous merde that Corso and those like him spew.

I dunno. Part of me was almost hoping that Corso might have a little something interesting to say, but instead all I got was the most unbelievable load of nonsense imaginable. Which is to be expected, I suppose.

Corso's an old man, but I don't think he's senile or anything. No, all it looks like is somebody with a few bills to pay and in need of some bucks. Someone who attempted to parlay his position in the military into some kind of nest egg, or payments for that cat scan, or

whothehell knows what. A scam. With malice afore-thought.

Now on to Area 51. Oh shit. Another damn UFO book. Worse, it was foisted off on me by a good friend who just so happens to edit a magazine. And the guy's a nitwit Kennedy/Oswald conspiracy buff, so there's no telling what the hell this thing is gonna have in it. But he's my buddy and I said I'd read the damn thing and review it.

Stupid me.

So where do you want to go today? Neptune perhaps? Sigma Draconis? Smegma Draconis? Who gives a fuck?

So it's off to bed, many beers in the rear view, and read myself to sleep with this latest tome of sensationalism. Why not? Surprise! The idiocy quotient seems to have bottomed out somehow, and utterly fails to register on the bullshit-o-meter! Hmm... Things became interesting right off the bat.

In the VERY beginning, between the dedication and the goddamned table of contents fer chrissakes, there's a little quote from something called Angels and Aliens - Nope, never laid eyes on it - that gave the game away immediately. D.D. has chanced upon the signal discovery that UFO's aren't really about aliens at all. Not a bit. Instead, they're about PEOPLE. Guys right here on the ground. Right now. Perhaps your next door neighbor. Or pershaps your scruffy brother-in-law from St. Louis. And we're not talking about camouflaged alines DIS-GUISED as your brother-in-law, either. Nope. We're talking about the uncanny happenstance that you and I dear reader are present at the creation. The creation of a mythos. This is shit that does not go on every day, or even every millennium. Rare stuff. When writers concoct out of pure phlogiston, concepts and "facts" that have no actual basis in reality but yet can

become factors that dominate your life insanely out of all proportion to their fundamental basis in the what-it-is-you-know.

Having trouble with that one? Can't blame you. I'll give you a point of reference. A certain fellow by the name of Jesus. For those who think he really came down as some damn incarnation of God or soemthing, he swings a pretty heavy club. For the rest of us, he's more a source of head scratching. How in HELL did all these morons persuade themselves of the holy hogwash that Jesus personifies? And especially so in light of the fact that so far as can be determined, the guy may not have even EXISTED, nevermind done all the weird ass shit he's accused of doing by the True Believers. Ditto UFO's. Same nonsense exactly. A complete lack of verifiable physical evidence has somehow been turned inside out and used as PROOF of all the goofy folderol that places like Area 51 are supposed to be doing, hiding, suppressing, whateverthehell.

Aliens. Spaceships.
Fantastically advanced technologies. And therein lies the rub.
Technologies. For the first time
EVER, a belief system is being
born that at its fundamental core
does NOT invoke spooks,
demons, angels, or any of the
other paraphernalia of the mystic
dipshits. And so, weirdly
enough, the UFO thing is actually GOOD.

Gods and spooks are for the FIRST TIME EVER not being invoked in the campfire tales that allow the common folk to deal with Big Issues like The Goodnes Of Humanity, How We Shall All Someday Be Brought Into The Light, and all the rest of that damnfool nonsense. All of the above might caution you to worry that David Darlington has launched himself into some damn metaphysical realm in which Heavy Topics prevail. Far, FAR from it. Basically the sonofabitch merely tells the tale

of what he did and what he found when he decided to poke around into this bizarro subject. Damn well done, Dave!

We start out with as much as can be determined of what's ACTUALLY going on at a ridiculously secret facility like the Air Force's Broom Lake installation, keeping ever in mind that to the extent that our government lies, denies, and sticks to it, things will be deduced, supposed, or outright made up about it.

Nature abhors a vacuum, and the information vacuum that surrounds top secret military installations like Broom Lake is just PERFECT for filling up with . . . what? Who the fuck knows? Which is the entire point. Any old body can pronounce himself an expert on the place, toss what ever the hell he chooses into the void and hoards of credulous people will just SNAP IT UP like gators in the swamp going after vour little sister when she falls off the airboat. And from here, D.D. proceeds to examine the CRA-ZIES who've set the parameters for the great UFO debate. Using whatever terms they choose. Let me tell you, some of these "terms" are pretty damn interesting. D.D. has a field day with it. Against a Salvador Dali backdrop of Black Budget Projects which have spawned things like the F-117 Stealth Fighter, and god only knows what else, a cast of characters has chosen this as its very own stage on which to strut and fret. Amazing! Just amazing stuff!

And I can't decide what I like better, the fact that human "brains" can come up with this gobbleydegook, or that other human "brains" can so voraciously gobble it up. And to top it off, it all happens just outside of LAS VEGAS! Can there be a more bizarre location on the planet? I think not.; Somehow it all swirls around and mixes very well indeed. You gotta get your hands on this thing. And be sure to make your scruffy brother-in-law from St. Louis read it too . . .



Ever listen to any of that new age, wiccan, whateverthehell mumbo jumbo that some people spout with learned expressions on their faces and wonder to yourself, "Where in tarnation did these dingdongs COME UP with all of this?" Who hasn't right?

Well, James Randi in his Encyclopedia decided to go have a look into all that whatever it is and see just exactly what the luck was the deal, here. The results of his most exhaustive inquiry form the body of this book, and it's a joy to behold. Just aces from top to bottom.

Randi's no dummy, and he's a persistent bastard to boot. He's dug and rooted and turned over all manner of rocks to expose whatever might be thinking and crawling out from under them. Furns out that there's a LOT of shit creeping around under a LOT of rocks.

And Randi shines the brilliant

light of honest skepticism on it all and watches the lot of it wither and rot under the glare of reasoned questioning. Way to go, Randi!

When I picked this thing up, I wasn't sure exactly what to expect. After some brief introudctory words, the author just pitches right in to it with both arms. Turns out the body of this reference is an alphabetized compendium of nearly every damn goof-ass thing you've ever wondered about when it comes to daffy people, dressed up in silly rigs, spouting about "auras," "vibrations" and all the rest of that kind of quackery.

And Randi don't cut nobody no slack along the way, either. Mainstream christians and their precious motherfucking Bible are in ther right along with the crowd that thinks something like a bezoar might be just what the witch doctor ordered. Every

damnfool thing that has been pawned off upon an ignorant populace in the name of majic and spiritual flummery gets its time in Randi's gunsight. And it's written really really well.

Randi has a lethal sense of sardonic humor and leaves few opportunities for a nasty swipe at the perpetrators and their too-willing victims unused. I found myself laughing out loud, even as I learned a WHOLE LOT about things that I've always wondered about.

Stuff like, "What's up with that weirdo name "abraxas" on that old Santana album?" Well now I've got the straight poop on the bullshit. Most satisfying.

This is gonna be one of my major reference books for a long time to come. I've always wanted something by way of a sensible roadmap for arcane spoutings, and now I have it.

Someobdy invokes some crack-

brain word like "rhabdomancy" on me and I'm gonna poke 'em in the eye with this thing. Serve 'em right, too.

So beware, spiritual gizorks, I'm armed and ready for you. And everybody else should be, too. Get this book. (James MacLaren)

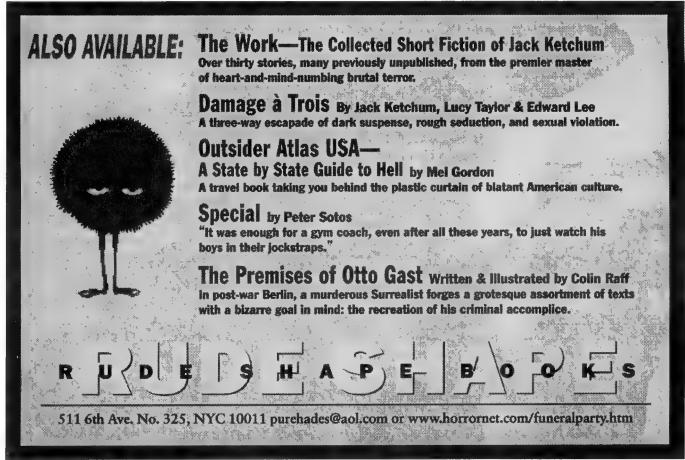
DANGEROUS DRAWINGS ed. Andrea Juno (1997) Juno Books

If you've actually read the current crop of indie comix, you may be curious about the personalities - at least the most popular ones - and issues behind them. Underground comix have been trying to regain the level of attention and acceptance they enjoyed in the psychedelic heydey of Crumb & Zap - with a

buzz bubbling up over the past

15 years around Raw & Eightball

& Maus. This collection of inter-





views with comix stars in part makes the case for the work as serious art that's been aruged in the scene for a while (and is the principle preoccupation of the Comics Journal). But the book is most unique and successful exploring the artists' stories in their own words and the power of these comix to make things happen and to change the cultural landscape despite their underground status. Like G.B. Jones' JD dyke girls kicking off the queercore phenomenon, or Diane Noomin & Aline Kaminsky-Crumb pulling more women into the genre through the inspiration of their editing and drawing work. The interviews are detailed, wide-ranging and thorough, exploring aspects of the counterculture in a countercultural manner. You get Speigleman, Clowes, Ware, Chester Brown & Julie Doucet all major artists - talking about craft, personal backgrounds, comics history, ideas on art, & the origins of their stories. The heaviest interview is probably Phoebe Gloekner's analysis of her fucked up teenage years in the sexually exploitative San Fran 70's, nad the most revolutionary is G.B. Jones, who's ideas on culture and her place in it are unique & powerful. The strangest part is how all these artists seemed to have suffered claustrophobic, repressed middle-class upbringings that they survived only by preserving a vivid inner life that now comes out in their drawings. (Jeff Bagato)

RETRO HELL Ed. Darby Romeo (1997) Little, Brown

In the last few years, the "nice player" has become common in jock jargon. This appraisal generally refers to an athlete who doesn't quite rate All Star nomination but certainly is well above the "adequate" level. (Those of us who don't dabble in sportspeak would likely substitute the phrase "pretty good.")

To stretch an analogy, Retro Hell, by the editors of Ben Is

Dead and friends, is a nice book. You may not find yourself phoning everyone you know and insisting "YOU'VE GOT TO BUY THIS!!!" (ya know, like you did when Brutarian debuted), but by no means does that remotely imply there's anything "wrong" with it. Think of getting a "B" on a report card or an "80" if you suffereed through those stalags known as Catholic schools.

Retro Hell contains about a thousand topics of importance to Darby Romeo and her crew as they drew up during the 70s and 80s. As clearly spelled out in the very first paragraph, this is not some sort of "definitive guide": it is instead a subjective recollection collection. None of that We-Are-The-Authoritative-Last-Word-On The-Subject 'tude here - thankfully. They even cop to the occasional donning of the rose-colored glasses or oversight. And therein lies the charm.

Reading Retro Hell is akin to listening in on private conversations between bright and mostly femal pals as tehy opine on hundreds of topics, literally from A to Z. Their frankness - and the courage it takes to go on public record with certain distintively non-hipster disclosures - is extremely admirable. Consider this: in the course of 250-plus pages of remarkably candid commentary, I didn't detect a single entry with the false ring of a self-conscious attempt to come off as supercool. Not one poseur in the pack!

Unlike most standard reference-type books, Retro Hell allows for multiple authors to ponder the same subject, either offering further reflections or a friendly couterpoint. Good Move A: Contributions are kept relatively brief, averaging roughly five topics per page. (If we wanted a windy treatise on The Significance Of The Sit-And-Spin In Relation To reagonomics, we'd go to the damn college library, right?)

Good Move B: Each block of text is followed by a parenthetic credit to its originator. After a while, the shameless lecher/groupie in me kicked in as it may with you - and I felt myself being attracted to the personality displayed within the prose of certain penwomen. (Gwynne and Ju-Ji, write and send photos!)

Retro Hell is as much character study of its contributors as it is an encyclopedia, the autobiographical references throughout providing some unexpected and often amusing or horrifying revelations. For instance, the label-consciousness drilled into the authoresses' heads as pubescents and related pressure to conform will have you wondering whether Invasion Of The Body Snatchers was a documentary.

The book's MVP Award goes to Bruce Elliot, who not only seemed to rcall every product marketed during the focus era, but also wrote a masterful introudction, a dead-on broadside to those who prefer to hide in a revisionist, sanitized version of the past. Right from the getgo you know they'll be referring to a load of great stuff you've probably forgotten but not with misty-eyed and shortened breath. In fact, in her forward Darby labels the 90s "Retro Hell, which . . . now seems to hold us entrenched in the past, like driving with your eyes glued on the rear-view mirror."

Here's where I get somewhat confused. Darby makes a point about how "a disturbing number of these people (from the writers' childhood), things, fashions, etc. have made mainstream comebacks" as of late and thus their inclusion with a special mark. However, there are myriad topics that never "went away" and are as much a part of the present as they were of the past - e.g. Jackie Chan, AIDS, Andy Sidaris. Although interesting and well-written, I question their inclusion in this context.

The above is admittedly a minor gripe; but it would be going Retro on Retro Hell to ignore it.

(Reviewer's note: Not that Retro Hell is remotely mopey, but if you're interested in an even wittier strictly-70s study, be sure to get RH contributor Candi Streckler's It's A Wonderful Lifestyle two-issue zine special. It goes for \$4 per volume. Less than you paid for a gallon of Boone's Farm. Candi is at P.O. Box 515, Brisbane, CA 94005) (Stately Wayne Manor)

LAID BARE - A MEMOIR OF WRECKED LIVES AND THE HOLLYWOOD DEATH TRIP John Gilmore

(1997) Amok Books

John Gilmore is my idea of a true 20th Century Renaissance man. Hollywood born and raised, he was a child actor, stage and screen player, screenwriter, lowbudget film director, journalist, true-crime writer, biographer, and novelist. Laid Bare, his recnt memoir, reads like a firstperson Hollywood Babylon only somewhat sleazier. This is the bare, warts-and-all, exposed, sweaty underbelly of show biz, as sen through the eyes of an insider who never quite became a star. It's a compelling, fascinating read, if, for no other reason, to see who the openly bisexual (trisexual? quad?) Mr. Gilmore has had sex with (or claims to have had sex with many of these people are longtime residents of Valhalla, and are in no position to confirm or deny his claims). And it's a fairly long list (see below). Mind you, I acknowledge that my skepticism in this area stems from my being a loser who has trouble getting first dates (or past first base on those I do get, assuming the woman is sane and/or has taste!).

Janis Joplin - Yeah, Gilmore fucked her, but not until after she became famous, even though he knew her best in the pre-Summer of Love days in San Francisco, when she was a spare-changing bum who, in the words of an ex-one night stand, "fucks like a truck . . . she wants to get on top and jump up and down . . . practically busted my rib cage."

Various Hollywood agents vying to represent the potential



matinee idol Gilmore in his younger days - some fucked him, some didn't. Some just mpilled the beans on their other clients - I never knew, for example, that Van Johnson "squeals like a girl when he takes it up the rump," or that the ultra-butch Steve Reeves (of Italian grade-B Hercules and gladiator film fame) was, in fact, somewhat nelly (known as "Miss Peter" to his bed-warming agent).

James Dean - he and Gilmore tried to get it on, but never really clicked. (Dean was simply too largely endowed to permit his sodomizing of John G.) Much of this book deals with his friendship with Dean (understandable, as Gilmore is apparently known for being one of Dean's best friends - for example, the first thing Jim Morrison asked Gilmore about, upon meeting him initially, was Dean). But no real new ground is broken as to Jimmy - we all knew Dean was fascinated with speed, death, and S&M, and that he'd fuck

anything or anybody to get a good part.

Jane Fonda - He fucked her. Brigitte Bardot - He would have fucked her, but she was pregnant when they knew each other briefly.

Jean Seberg - He fucked her. Roddy McDowell - He propositioned Gilmore, who declined.

Sal Mineo - See cometns on McDowell.

William S. Burroughs There's a particularly unapppetizing description of Burroughs,
fucked up on absinthe, staring at
Gilmore's crotch and drooling,
only to suddenly go into a fit,
frothing at the mouth and crapping his pants. For what it's
worth, no, Gilmore never got it
on with the novelist and wouldbe William Tell pistolero.

Besides the sex-gossip trash above, you also get to hear about: Hank Williams' loss of bladder control in his last days, due to acute alcoholism (Gilmore hung out with him one drunken night); Tony Perkins' proclivity

for getting arrested for having sex with men in theater backrows and public restrooms: Dennis Hopper's drug-addled wandering around Greenwhich Village, asking women if they wanted to fuck (hey, sometimes it worked!); the same Mr. Hopper's fetish for amputees, including an especially disturbing description of his relationship with an armless woman; Jack Nicholson' penchant for mooching other peoples' dope and booze, along with his tendency to take any acting part thrown his way (THIS is a surprise, after watching Little Shop of Horrors, The Terror, or The Raven?); Lenny Bruce's drug habits (another big surprise???) Ed Wood's wackiness (per Maila "Vampira" Nurmi) - "He's fucking nuts! He's a transvesstite . . and he isn't even a queer!"); the revelation that Carlos Castenada never took any kind of drugs,m ushrooms, or other dope - he was apparently just a big liar, in addition to being a fat loser who couldn't get girls; Steve McQueen's politically incorect intolerance ("I hate Neggers. Jews and wops!") and habits of shoplifitng food from grocery sotres and stealing tips from waiters and bartenders in restaurants; and dozens of othe juicy tidbits about all of our favorite stars of the 50s and 60s. One more item - while Mr. Gilmore worked with Andy Devine on a TV show, he did not attempt to have sex with him!

You'll notice I haven't spent any time discussing character development or the real-life personalities of these stars. For the most part, neither does Gilmore most of them simply come across as shallow, opportunistic, back-stabbing pigs who would stick a shiv between their mother's ribs if she prevented them from getting a decent part. To quote Gary Indiana's review of this book, these people "don't change into wonderful beings just because ten million people know who they are. They just have a big arena in which to be assholes."

Mr. Gilmore also spends

some time discussing his interest in true-crime stories, which resulted in his books on the Black Dahlia murder (Severed), Charles Schmid and the Tucson murders (Cold-Blooded), and the Manson family silliness (The Garbage People). These are all fascinating reads, although not nearly as much fun as this hymn to decadence, depravity, drugs and death. A couple of minor complaints - I wish Gilmore had spent a little more time going into the trashy pulp novels he wrote in the 50s (Brutal Baby, Dark Obsession, Strange Fire, Lesbos in Panama, and Meat House). Also, why didn't he print a list of his various film, screenplay, TV show, and book credits at the end? Is this a tease for Part II of his memoirs? (John Oliver)

BODIES OF SUBVERSION: A SECRET HISTORY OF WOMEN AND TATTOO Margot Mifflin (1997) Juno Books

"Not another tattoo book!" you may be saying. This one's a little different. Not only does it cover the history of women and tattoo, but in doing so, the work covers the history of society and tattoo as well. The first tattooed women were circus & sideshow attractions - and the series of old pictures of these stars alone makes Bodies valuable, particularly to sideshow fans. Tattoo for women has always paralleled rising trends in women's rights movements - including the end of the 19th Century! - and thus also reflects a loosening of social restrictions. Contemporary women tattoo artists are introduced one after another in one section - pioneers & iconoclasts, tattooed or not - which might have been improved by a few longer first person accounts. If you just want pictures of tattooed women, there's plenty of those; from there you can dip into the history: the Victorian high society tattoo fad, sideshow girls' tattoo abduction stories, tattoo and mastectormy patients, biker sluts & tattoo, etc. The "secret" link





among them is the role of tattooing as a marker of personal and social awareness of power - also the theme of Modern Primitives but here attached to women asserting themselves in their own lives, and as a result, creating a renewing & influential countercultural tide. Thumb through it and see - another fine coffee table book with a purpose. (Jeff Bagato)

VIRTUAL UNREALITIES: THE SHORT FICTION OF ALFRED BESTER

(1998) Vintage

Hindsight is a marvelous mechanism for reevaluating authors, and a new compilation of an acclaimed writer's signature works is an excellent excuse for doing so. Although Alfred Bester (1913-1987) is probably best known for his ground-breaking novels The Stars My Destination (1956) and The Demolished Man (1953), many of his short stories are equally as memorable, and editors Robert Silverberg and Keith R. A. Candidio have selected the most notable from the author's body of work.

Bester's first short story publication ("The Broken Axiom") in the classic pulp magazine Thrilling Wonder Stories in 1939 earned him a \$50 prize. Subsequent stories were wellreceived, but like many other SF authors of his generation, he never seemed to consider working in that genre as a "real" job. His "official" lifelong writing career included gigs scripting comics (D.C.'s Superman and Batman titles, among others) and radio dramas (including Charlie Chan and The Shadow), screenwriting for television in the 1950's, and writing travel articles for the slicks.

As a science fiction writer he hit his stride in the early 50's, and well over half the stories in this new collection are from that time period. Despite the inevitable dating of some of his settings, many of the ideas he

wrestled with seem as fresh as ever.

At its finest, Bester's prose is vital and fast-moving, probably due to his scripting experience. Plots are deployed swiftly, played out agressively, and resolution is usually swift, frequently spotlighting a resonant image that ligners long after the story is done. His weak point tends to be character development, probably due to his coming of age during the Golden Age of the pulps, where action was king. Surprisingly enough, accurate science is also a frequent casualty in his stories. The strength of his work comes with the vision of new ideas.

One of the strongest themes running through Bester's works is that of obsession. In "The Stars My Destination" Gully Foyle's preoccupation with revenge takes him to a destiny no one would ever have envisioned for him. Likewise in Bester's short stories we find characters like the artist in "5,271,009" whose fixed belief that his creativity arises solely from his refusal to accept maturity; or "The Pi Man," whose apparent mania for symmetry turns out to have a deadly serious reason. In "Disappearing Act," General Carpenter's quest to secure "the American Dream" uncovers a group of people whose desire to find their own safe dream worlds is strong enough to physically transport them there.

The power of wishes also drives the conflict in the quirky-titled "Oddy and Id" and "Star Light, Star Bright," with a little help from Bester's own schooling in psychology. That training serves him most impressively in the disturbing projection of "Fondly Fahrenheit," where the mind of a murderer and his companion are so inexorably twisted together that they become inseparable.

Time paradoxes - the consequences of time travel - are another common theme here.

"The Men Who Murdered Mohammed" gives us a humorous look at desperate characters who learn too late that time is at once more and less flexible than they wish. The search for a personal Golden Age leads thousands of people to an eternity of time-shuffling, "bumming through the centuries" in "Hobson's Choice," while the frustrations of love are further complicated by time's passing in "Time is the Traitor."

Bester's later stories such as "The Flowered Thundermug" and "Galatea Galante," stretch toward parody, drawing even larger-than-usual versions of his usual larger-than-life characters into tangled, near-noir plots. "Adam And No Eve" and "They Don't Make Life Like They Used To" are the most romantic - though no less cynical and slightly bitter for all their tenderness.

Bester's oeuvre cleanly delineates the timeline of modern science fiction as a literary genre, running from the vigorous pulp style of the 40's to the New Wave writers of the 60's and early 70's. Many of today's better-known SF authors, including William Gibosn, Michael Moorcock, and Samuel R. Delany, are not shy to point out Bester's influence on their own seminal works.

In a famous 1957 essay, SF writer and critic Damon Knight wrote: "Bester's science is all wrong, his characters are not characters but funny hats; but you never notice: he fires off a smoke-bomb, climbs a ladder, leaps from a trapeze, plays three bars of "God Save the King," swallows a sword and dives into three inches of water. Good heavens, what more do you want?

(Charlene Brusso)



Collect 'em all!

A-GY-RPS-MOTICE CLYS-LCS-M-TO-DCATH WITH-T-FUNNES!











SURP RISE THE END

GORMAN DE

73

So there I was, superimposing Michael Hutchence's face on a Hang 'Em High poster when it occurred to me that sequeing between trains of thought in the last couple of columns weakened them. Why was I doing it? Because I had lost sight of the whole reason for penning O-M-M: to amuse ME, not readers!

"Oh, that Stately is so self-indulgent!" Damn straight - and I take ultimate pride in being thrice hailed as "The Most Conceited Man In The World" in - self-penned, natch - articles appearing in only the finest of supermarket tabloids. It's not secret I walk down Lovers' Lane, holding my own hand - thus, when it comes to this issue's topic, you best believe I am an expert on the subject.

Writing below the Best Seller List stratum generally equates to all fame, no fortune. Fact: Most zines don't pay their scribes. Conclusion: Though there are laudable souls - most often publishers - who slave over a hot keyboard inspired solely by their drive to enlighten, the v-a-s-t majority of unpaid writers put word on paper for the ego trip.

If it's not about an ego rush, then answer me this: What percentage of zines maintain total staff anonymity? (And just look at the massive swarm of pathetically vapid personal Web sites, every sad sack's message in a bottle clogging the information supersewer.)

Wise up, ostrich: EVERY scene has a sordid scenebehind-the-scene, a seamy place where pumped heads - and the politicking related to them - prevail. Did you know, for example, many of the bands you think are extracool won't allow their lights to be used by an opening act? And can you imagine what goes into the selection of a new Pope? Self-love makes the world go 'round.

Despite its ability to corrupt, egoism is a superb motivator: forget the inspiration of flag, family, faith and finances, the most wondrous feats are accomplished for the primary sake of topping everyone else. As humble as they may act - and I do mean "act" - every performer is essentially saying "Look what I do better than you." Professor Manor calls this "entertainer's ego" and there's nothing wrong with it . . . except when wasted on a no-talent.

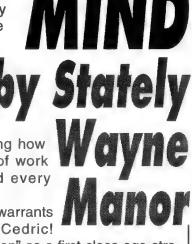
The ego can be the greatest plaything since the Whammo Air-Blaster if you're lucky enough to possess a mean streak. Yes, you too can torture jerkolas for as little as 64 cents postage!

Getting celebrities' legit mailing addresses is remarkable easy these days. Draw up a brief list including individuals you particularly loathe in sports or the arts. Ideally, they'll be high-profile enough - despite the absolute

MANOR'S minimum of discernible skills - to be surrounded by suck-ups who won't tell the sucka he sucks. The next step is to mail an enormously flattering letter to Pat O'Brien, Liz Smith, Shawn Bradley, Joe Piscopo or whomever is on the list, professing how

the celeb's entire body of work has profoundly affected every aspect of your life. Why kiss the butt that warrants

kicking? It's a set-up, Cedric! Once the star sums up "a fan" as a first-class ego-stroker, he'll encourage another letter and anxiously await it. Comply immediately; but, instead of smooching the





other cheek, bludgeon his skull with the most vitriolic missive imaginable.

Psyche psabotage is so much fun. After an intro akin to "You actually believed that facetious letter I sent before?!? You must be even more stupid and delusional than I thought!", it's time to tell the loser he's lower than snake snot. To a thesp: "The closest you should be allowed to a stage is to be tied to a stagecoach and dragged through the streets of Westworld." To a jock: "That last game against Detroit was recorded history's single worst display of physical ineptitude since your wedding night."

Cruel? Maybe. So what if it is? These targets deserve deflation. How dare they accept the attention and funds that should rightly go to myself and fellow ultragifted maxitalents! Imus, fighting a feverish battle with Ferelle to determine the planet's most obnoxious radio "personality," has lived in New York for about 200 years yet wears an absurd cowboy hat, rarely lifts his chin off his chest an even chews gum in an annoying manner. How dare he be better-known than Steve Buscemi! Tori Spelling is wealthier than Robert Williams, R. Crumb and everyone you know . . . combined. And she looks that way after cosmetic surgery. Ready, aim, fire!

True, these address list services are an appalling invasion of privacy; but they're here to stay so we might as well exploit them. First off, they also provide a superb way of hooking up with celebs who are not creeps. Then there's the option of upholding that long-standing American tradition, volunteering unsolicited opinion where it's least welcome. Doesn't that girl in the testimonial ad deserve to hear the truth? "You may have lost 43 pounds, but you're still ugly." Or how about the latest idiot small-timer in the headlines? "My entire Elks Lodge thinks you came off like a complete jackass on the news."

Incidentally, if you are considering being "clever" and "fixing" me by pulling the kiss-up/put-down routine on Sir Manor, don't bother. The only flattering notes I take to heart are the ones I send myself.

EXTRAORDINARY INSIGHT: Here's a real scalpscratcher. The book *Please Kill Me* was named after a shirt worn by Richard Hell - who is one of the few original NYC punk scenesters still alive! . . . This issue's jen-u-wine quote from a barstool intellectual, explaining Ted Turner's wealth: "He used to own Time-Warner but he sold that." Thanks for the info, Mr. Edison . . If those 900-line "psychics" are as sharp as they claim, why don't they tell you your credit card number? . . . As much as I enjoy the music, rap is I-o-n-g overdue for some new moves. Outlaw the bit where the arms are swung inwards to cross at the body's centerline, and 5092 rappers will be out of work . . . Another moratorium worthy of implementation: "Where are they now?"

end-graphics regarding the characters of a fictional film. (This gimmick was fresh and funny at the close of Animal House - but that was 20 goddamn years ago, plagiarists.) . . . I am very concerned over the escalating tendency for one man to refer to another as "bitch" during a heated exchange of words. Um, do a lot of toe-touches while you were in lockdown, fella? . . . Certain actors and musicians are around microphones for hours and hours on end; nonetheless, they still don't understand it's not necessary to scrunch over to get within an inch of the mic on an awards show dais. By the same token, cliche screenwriters tell us that every single solitary time an amateur approaches a mic, it feeds back. Confusing contraption, innit? . . . I deeply abhor that ludicrous fist-toward-face/thumb-touchingchin publicity photo pose. Do these halfwits ever take a quarter-second to think how people NEVER ONCE naturally assume this position in their entire lives? . . . With computer and "correctness" terms - PC and PC! becoming more common in everyday language, what was once "a problem" has been pasteurized to "an issue." I wonder if this happens: the Microsoft cafeteria bully gets in the face of the dorkiest geek and intimidates him with the query "You got an issue?"

HUBBA HUBBA HONEYS: what's the best freebie babe parade for those beyond walking distance of South Beach? For my no money, it's the barrage of fitness ads and infomericals dominating off-peak TV. I couldn't name a single product being hawked, mind you, but, hot damn, those firm fillies are fine. Who can be bothered with attention to graphics and voiceovers when Gin Miller is doing the doggy on a big blue ball or a stretch stringamabob is toning Tamilee Webb's galaxy-class glutes?

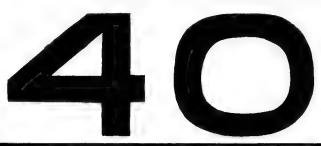
In some ways, these Fitness Follies are reminiscent of the early days of exploitation films, wherein patrons could play along with the pretense of being enlightened to health benefits, but what really drew the viewers was all that femme flesh on the screen. Now as then, the producers just happen to spotlight stunning physical specimens and positively must zoom in for lingering close-ups of the models' best features - purely for educational purposes, ya see. Sign me up for the Cameraman's Union!

Save the feminist rhetoric, sister. Those angels work hard to look so heavenly in flesh-hugging Spandex, and it's their job to have people admire their bods. If ogling isn't paramount to the whole pitch, they'd use tankers from the Jerry Springer audience in baggy sweatsuits. Or a jealous gelatin like you.

Fitness foxes, here's a Stately Salute to every one of you. You may often go unnamed, but you never go unnoticed. (And Jake - as in "Body By" thanks for the buttisimos, abbadabbas and all points north.)

-your friend, Stately Wayne Manor

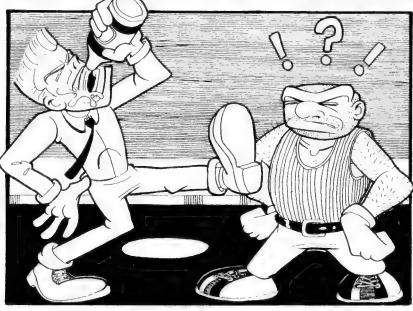
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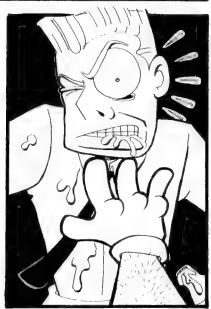


OUNCES



MALT













The X-rated video industry's long-term memory is shot. And its short-term stuff ain't too good either. It's always been a business where forgiveness is granted if the dollar signs are impressive enough. If someone thinks they're going to make money off someone else, they'll forsake almost anything. I.e. health, as evidenced in surgicallyenhanced hooters of unsafe proportions in order to sell more tapes. Countless actresses have had problem with breast implants which sprung leaks, mostly associated with post-boob-job pregnancies. Performers like Nicole London and Tori Welles have had one or more of their saline packets removed. As of this writing, London goes gloriously unenhanced, while Welles has been reupped upon her re-entry into the jizz circle.

And let's not even begin to talk about how AIDS concerns are swept under the rug. The reluctance to use condoms on film and the hiring of performers known to use IV drugs is still the norm rather than the exception. Questionable test results are often overlooked. If it'll make a buck, fuck 'em. If she's new, nubile and looks good on a box cover, who cares where she's been. Case in point, Nena Cherry who reportedly gave John "Buttman" Stagliano a dose of A.

Eight years ago, I was almost booted out of the adult video industry because I helped an X-rated performer write his biography. Everyone was pissed as hell because Jerry Butler exercised his First Amendment rights by getting Raw Talent published. Meanwhile, these are the very same people who form organizations and coalitions to protect their own say so. Perhaps freedom of speech is something



to the death your right to say it." Obviously this doesn't apply when you're talking about Lois Ayres' pussy.

For a time, Al Goldstein banished me from the pages of SCREW. Until one of his editors reminded him, "Hey, if you want to use more female writers, she's it." And I was promptly forgiven.

There was a print war going on between Jim "White Shoes" Holliday, the biggest

> kisser butt Coozeland, and myself going back and forth via letters published in Adult Video News. We'd never met, never spoken and he never had the decency to confront me with the problems he had with Butler's book in private. I always reasoned that he resented the fact that such a

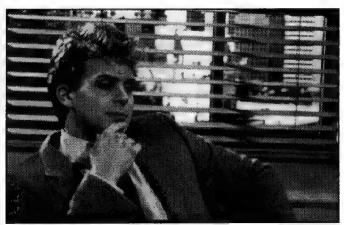
young whippersnapper as myself was getting all sorts of national press coverage (spots on Donahue, Geraldo, People are Talking) while his self-promoted Only the Best, which expounds "the best" according to Lord Holliday didn't get any mainstream hoopla.

Returns

When I finally met Holliday years later, I felt sorry for the guy. The porn business was all he was, all he had. He couldn't stop talking about himself and his achievements because maybe he was scared no one else would. I was ready to lambaste him, challenge him but he struck me as so pathetic, I didn't have the heart to do either.

Jeremy Stone, editor of Adam Film World, suddenly invented a reason to drop "Pick for Pairs," a column I had been writing for years. He swore up and down it had nothing to do with Butler's harsh criticism of two of Stone's wives, his ex Kelly Nichols and his present Kimberly Carson. Butler said that if he had to name five actresses he hated to work with, he'd name Kim twice. Stone was still married to Carson at the time Raw Talent came out, although I hear he's now moved on to erotic luminary Christy Canyon.

Ron Jeremy refused to even talk to me after Raw Talent was published. Some of Jerry B's gems said Jeremy was cheap plus he didn't have the best hygiene habits on



the planet. I had a picture from Butler's private stash to prove it: Jeremy on the set wearing hole-infested briefs. Jeremy took the worst sort of revenge against me possible. He started passing rumors that he'd had sex with me. Friends from both coasts started calling me up, going, "Yuck!" But to Mr. Jeremy's credit, he never confronted me or made a public spectacle. There were times when we were at the same party in the same hotel suite. We merely ignored each other like grown ups.

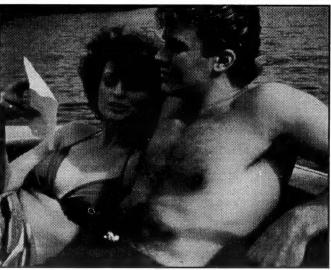
After a couple of years, Ronnie calmed down. During that time, I continued recommending him for roles in videos I'd written, like The Hunchback of Notre Dame. (No, not for the title role but as a sleazy club owner.) I could understand his hurt and was sorry he felt that way, but on the other hand, I wasn't the person who'd said all that stuff. It was Butler's book entirely. I just made sure he dotted his I's, crossed his T's and translated his hyper prose into something the average porn consumer could understand. Despite his resentment of me, I knew Jeremy was still a talented actor in both comedic and dramatic roles. Having him in my movie could only make it better. So, why act like a baby?

And the funny thing was, throughout all this, Butler was still making sexvids. True, some people refused to hire him. Some actresses refused to work with him (mostly because his then-wife was a heroin user), however, Butler continued to eke out a meager existence in porn. He made movies in LA, Germany and New York. He only left the business when HE decided to do so, seeking a "normal" life, a regular job, a respectable career.

Jerry once told me he'd hoped writing Raw Talent would force him to leave the X-rated business, that he'd finally "burn his bridges" and have to walk another path. But the glittery world of hard-ons and fake fingernails had such a strong grasp that Jerry didn't leave until he realized the luxury of cocaine his dirty porn dollars was helping him buy would soon kill him if he didn't get out.

So, he did.

This past October, some seven years after Raw Talent was published and approximately five years after Butler left the jizz biz to drive a New York City school bus



Above: Jerry with Kelly Nichols Below: Jerry with Kim Carson



and clean up his act, he made an appearance at the East Coast Video Show. It was amazing, like watching the Prodigal Son return home. Bill Margold, longtime adult movie guru and a warm paternal figure (he calls almost everyone "Kid") helped get Jerry free entry into the convention. Margold looked on with a mixture of pride and respect as fans of all ages recognized Butler in their ranks and asked for autographs. He wise-cracked, posed for pics and told bad jokes in his motor-mouth fashion. In many ways, it was like Jerry Butler had never left.

But in other ways, this was another Jerry Butler, one beat up by life, happy to be alive, a little older and wiser. "I don't recognize the faces anymore," he admitted, pacing the aisles and taking note of the endless stream of blonde bimbettes who all looked alike. But when Nina Hartley embraced him, Jerry quipped, "I don't know why, but I could never get a full erection when I worked with Nina. But when

she hugged me just now, I got a hard-on." Go figure.

Randy West's face dropped when he saw Butler. Then Jerry ran off to Ron Jeremy's booth "to get the \$20 that prick borrowed from me ten years ago," he added. Vanessa Del Rio was pleasantly shocked. "I read Raw Talent and liked it," she said. But Butler apologized for the cruel way he treated her during their love affair back in the '80s (see page 126-127 of RT).

One by one, his former costars registered surprise then delight. But no one was more delighted than Butler himself. "I needed to come here. I needed to

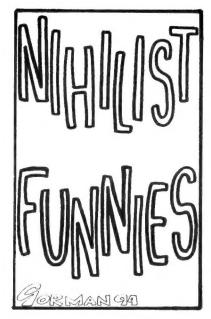
see," he told me. "These people were a big part of my life. They WERE my life. They were like family. A fucked-up family, yes, but it was MY fucked up family."

Jerry and I hadn't spoken for years.³ There were no bad feelings between us, his ex-wife just hates me (she's convinced we were lovers; never were, never will be) and besides, she's a maniac. When Jerry phoned me out of the blue right before the East Coast Video Show and said he was going to attend, my attitude was, 'Yeah,

right.' As always, he's full of surprises.

A few weeks after the ECVS, Jerry kept calling me, asking me to help him get back into the business. I explained all the risks, all the ways it's changed for the worse, how it's gotten more dangerous health-wise. It's not that Jerry needs the money. It's not that he needs anything. Except maybe that need to belong.

So, the Prodigal Son returned. Maybe not to a banquet but to open arms and a little fanfare. Stronger, in better shape. Older, wiser, with tiny lines around his eyes. Will Jerry Butler ever get back into porn? I doubt it, although the opportunity is there. Perhaps he just wanted to know that he could. He just wanted to visit. At least for a little while, then go back into the real world, driving handicapped kids to and from school, making them laugh, making everyone laugh. It's something about Jerry that few people understand. Guess you'll just have to read the book.



















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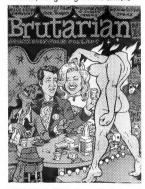
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